Food Is Where the Heart Is: The Food Narratives of Foreign Nationals Living in Johannesburg

by

Vimbai Mawela

201202798

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Dedication

To my grandfather, Charles Samson Makari, this is for you. A brilliant author, the best grandfather and my biggest supporter. Thank you for watching over us. I miss you always. This is for you, Mr Sekuru!

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the food narratives of migrants living in Johannesburg. The main focus of the study was on how participants tie themselves to their countries of origin, “home”, through the food that they eat and how they prepare it; thus, preserving their culture through their food. Ten migrants from diverse backgrounds were selected as participants in this study, with the study being set in each of their kitchens. The research made use of an ethnographic approach, with a focus on unpacking the migrants’ stories, in an effort to understand the role that food plays in a migrant’s adjustment to the host land. The study employed qualitative methods, such as participant observation and in-depth conversations, in order to obtain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the migrants’ stories and experiences about their navigation between home and the host land.

Memories were proven to be valuable in the host land, as they helped in the maintenance of a home identity and the “recreation” of home in the host land. Memory itself was used as a framework within the study to unpack how migrants navigated issues around identity in the host land. Along with a need to maintain a homeland identity, there was also an aspect of renegotiating a new identity, as migrants began to adopt behaviours and other influences from the host land. This is not to say that they abandoned who they were before, but instead, they added to who they are. This dissertation concludes by looking at the daily individual struggles and social challenges that they each have had to navigate as part of renegotiating a new identity.

Keywords: Food, home, migrant, migration, identity, memory, renegotiation, ethnography, host land, narratives

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Leaving her country
was not easy for my mother
I still catch her searching for it
In foreign films
And the international food aisle

- Rupi Kaur

December 2018:

It is a relaxed Saturday late in the afternoon. My family and I have gathered at my uncle's house in anticipation of my grandmother's yearly visit. Her flight should be landing around 6:00pm so we expect her to be here around 6:45 pm. We have missed her. A year is a long time, and with our family being spread across the world now, we cherish those moments when we get to see our loved ones, especially when they are visiting from back home. I am originally from Zimbabwe and because of the tough economic conditions there, my family and I were fortunate enough to move to South Africa when I was 13. There is a clear excitement in the house as finally she arrives. There is a hum as 14 people mill around, all of us moving as a mass, crowded around the small frame of my grandmother. Like moths to a flame, we move as one around her, going from the car, where we all got a chance to embrace her, through to the kitchen and finally in the lounge, where we all sit around her, drawn to her; the excitement is palpable.

The one case that contains her clothes, along with her handbag, has been moved to the guest room. As we exchange greetings, I am silently eying the other suitcases and bags that have been placed just past the entrance to the lounge. Mentally, I am already in those bags, excited to see what she has brought with her this time. Will she have remembered to bring the items I added to the list at the last minute? What other surprises are in there? Finally, with greetings having been exchanged and a polite amount of time spent waiting, my mother motions, and the young people in the family, guided by my mother and aunt, begin unzipping bags and taking out packages. My grandmother has arrived and with her arrival, so too has food from back home. Packages intricately wrapped in newspapers and black bags surface; this one has sweet potatoes in it, another has pork pies, mangoes, peanuts, cereal, juice and so much more. I am not concerned about all of this as I have not yet found what I wanted. But in the midst of all these packages, my hand brushes against one that feels right. I try to curb my excitement, lest it is not what I wanted,

and finally I open the package to reveal Mazhanje. This is an indigenous fruit from Zimbabwe that I had not eaten in three years and had pined over for two of those three years; my grandmother remembered to pack them! As I sit on the kitchen floor beaming, with my package in hand, I look over and see other members of my family, they too clutching whatever it was they had asked my grandmother to bring, and in that moment, everything was right with the world.

1.1 Introduction

Food has been, and continues to be, a big part of life. Along with water, it is essentially a life force in itself. It therefore, comes as no surprise that it has become a big part of humanity; with conflicts large and small fought over food, migration occurring in search of food, and food even becoming an essential part of national identities. In present times, we see food move beyond just sustenance, with food becoming a medium for creative expression. Food, and the consumption thereof, has become a means of socialisation and even a marker of success. Researchers have long been interested in food, as well as the relationships that people have with food, from societal perspectives (Henisch, 1976; Fandrin *et al.*, 2013; Atkins and Bowler, 2016), trade perspectives (Nonacs and Dill, 1990; Allan, 1995; Tombe, 2015), agricultural perspectives (Alexandratos, 1999; Giovannucci *et al.*, 2012; Carolan, 2016), psychological perspectives (Koster, 2003; Rappoport, 2010; Lyman, 2012), and even nutritional perspectives (Armar-Klemesu, 2000; Germov and Williams, 2004; Fieldhouse, 2013); the studies are endless. When it comes to the field of Anthropology, food and eating have long been of interest to the discipline (Mintz and Du Bois, 2002).

The first works on food in Anthropology appeared late in the 19th century, with work from Garrick Mallery (1888) and William Robertson Smith (1889). Some of the great names in Anthropology (Boas, 1921; Levi-Strauss, 1965; Douglas 1966) have also looked at different anthropological phenomena and its relation to food (Mintz and Du Bois, 2002). When it comes to the discourse around food and migration within the discipline, studies began appearing in the late 1980s, for example, through the work of Claude Fischler (1988), who looked at migrant identity and its relationship with food, but only started picking up steam in the late 1990s, with a lot of work now being done in the 21st century. Studies that have been conducted around food and migration have included, but not limited to, the diaspora (Duruz, 2010; Alder, 2015), identity (Appadurai, 1988; Fischler,

1988; Torresan, 2001) and ideas around home (Andits, 2015; Bailey, 2017). All of these studies, and many others similar to them, started and continued conversations around migrants and their engagement with food in the host land.

As such, many stories still need to be told, as food plays an important role in the life of the migrant in several layers that can be explored. Beyond the joy experienced by my family and myself, food has the ability to help an otherwise unfamiliar landscape feel more welcoming. With a move across the continent or even across the world, migration is never easy because, along with a promise of a better future, there is an insurmountable amount of loss experienced by the individual. From leaving loved ones, familiar places, faces, traditions and customs, this is not an easy move. Not everyone is lucky enough to have family in the host land, and so the move can be quite lonely. In an effort to adjust to the unfamiliar country, migrants often take pieces of home with them or recreate what they can, and food is usually the one feature of culture that is bound to survive (Brown and Paszkiewicz, 2016).

Food not only connects people to their homelands, but also plays a role in negotiating new identities in the host land. This study tells the story of ten migrants and their entangled relationship with food, identity and place. I draw on memory as a framework to analyse the thick descriptive data collected for this ethnography.

1.2 Research Aim and Sub-Questions

The aim of the study is to investigate and document the food narratives of migrants from various parts of the world who are currently living in Johannesburg. I specifically want to understand:

1. What food is being prepared by migrants in their kitchens and how do they prepare it?
2. How does the kitchen space transform at different times of the day and how do members of the household interact around the kitchen?
3. What are the different roles and meanings attributed to food in the lives of migrants?
4. Do migrants engage with their homeland and if so, in what ways?
5. Is there a difference, if at all, between the migrants' experiences of their homeland and the host land?

6. How does traditional homeland cuisine allow for the self-expression of the individual migrant?

1.3 Rationale

Although there is a plethora of research conducted on migrants and food, as mentioned earlier, not much research has focused on migrants from diverse backgrounds, specifically residing within Africa, as they engage with the meaning of food and the role that it plays in their individual kitchens and lives, by assisting them with settling into the host land. My study will therefore address this gap in knowledge, by focusing on the food narratives of ten foreign nationals living in Johannesburg, South Africa, after having moved here as young adults to pursue different endeavours. My study looks at the lives of migrants from several countries across the world, although the majority are originally from Africa.

This research is aimed at understanding, not only the relationships that the participants have with their homeland and host land, but more so, the daily happenings within their kitchens. The research also looks at the participants' interactions with food which may echo their home identity, as well as the new norms which they have adopted to reflect new identities acquired from the host land. In all of this, there is also an effort to understand the individual expressions of each migrant, and how they make use of food in the host land to better acclimatise to the move from, and the loss of, home. This study is in no way exhaustive; there is still a lot more work which should be done on migrants, homemaking and belonging, along with the role that food plays in it. This study, however, offers a valuable lens through which to further explore this entanglement between food and migrant identity in the host land.

1.4 Structure

The structure of this study is broken down into several chapters namely; the literature review which aims to unpack the discourses that have taken place around food, followed by the methodology, which looks at the methods used in conducting this research. The next chapter is the findings and analysis chapter, which has been separated into three parts in an effort to best unpack and analyse the stories from the field; and then finally, the conclusion, which aims to summarise and emphasise the main points of the study and offer closing remarks.

1.4.1 Literature Review

For my literature review, I looked at the literature under four main headings: migration, memory, home and identity. Current food trends show an interest in what is going on in the food of the "other" (Nandy 2004). There is an increase in shared food cultures and in the pursuit of exotic foods. Middle-class homes are giving rise to experimental and adventurous cooks who are venturing into the unfamiliar realm of exotic cuisines (Van Esterik, 2008; Hirsch, 2011). Synonymous to this sharing of food cultures is also an increase in people migrating across the world. There are several reasons for migrating, some being voluntary and others non-voluntary (Van Hear, 2010). However, regardless of the reasons, this move is never easy, as previously mentioned.

According to literature, food is important in the life of the migrant, as culture and traditions are stored in its seams, later to be reproduced through generational recipes, cookbooks and memories (Appadurai, 1988; Counihan, 1998; Sutton, 2001; Sutton, 2011; Plaza, 2014). A lot of the culture is brought to life through remembering and, as a result, memory and food share an important relationship. Because food provides a sense of community in its preparation and consumption, and because of its presence in daily life, it helps in contributing to individual and collective memory (Sutton, 2011; Alder, 2015). According to Linke (2015), individual remembrance, collective memory and narrative history interact and shape each other, as different versions of the past are constructed and reconstructed, and modified and invented. I look at the role that comfort foods play in the adjustment of the migrant in combating feelings of homesickness and other negative feelings (Spence, 2017).

Community building is a big part of the migrant experience and further adds to the way in which memories are created. Communities are created in the host land by people who share the same heritage and culture; these communities are referred to as diasporic populations (Plaza, 2014). These groups help in providing a sense of belonging for the migrant and produce a space where they can engage with, and consume, the culture from back home (Alder, 2015). With this, often realising the need that migrants have for the familiar in the host land, shopkeepers capitalise and provide products from home (Mankekar, 2002). Products are oversold and overpriced, but migrants are happy, as they have a slice of home available to them, where they can continually return to buy food, music and other additional products from their homeland. Home in the host land means

different things for different people (Andits, 2015). People continually seek out home in the host land and do this through the consumption of different materials from home, most importantly food (Plaza, 2014). Migrants will carry their customs from home, and these will occupy their homes in the host land. Commensality, the sharing of food, is important in the maintenance and recreation of these cultural features.

Finally, I unpack literature on identity, exploring the ways in which identity is perceived and expressed. The formation and reformation of migrant identities, both at home and in the host land, is explored in an effort to understand how food interacts with, and is a part of, the identity formation and maintenance (Alder, 2015; Brown, 2016).

1.4.2 Methodology

My study was set in the homes of my participants and grocery stores in Johannesburg, therefore making my research multi-faceted. I had migrant participants in my study from different walks of life. I chose to conduct the research in my participants' homes as I could then follow along with the daily rhythms of their lives. With each visit, I spent an average of five hours in the homes, and I conducted two or three visits per home, depending on the availability of participants. For my study, I took on the ethnographic approach, as this was the only research technique that could highlight the nuances of their daily lives, by allowing me to fully immerse myself in their experiences.

I employed several research methods within my study in an effort to best capture the lives of my participants. The first of these methods was participant observation, which allowed me to experience their lives along with them. I also kept a field notebook in which I took detailed notes and conversations, which were maintained throughout the research process and, in addition to this, I took photos in the field. I also recorded our conversations to help me retain as much information as possible, especially when note-taking was not possible. On the first visit to their homes, I took kitchen mappings to help me remember the layout of their kitchens and finally, I asked participants to keep a food diary for two weeks, detailing what they ate on each day, to give me a better indication of their food habits and the influence behind them. The data collection was spread over a period of eight months.

1.4.3 Findings and Analysis

My findings and analysis chapter was split into three parts namely; “Pleased to meet you, pleased to eat your food”, “Maintaining echoes of home” and “Renegotiating a new identity through food”. This was done to best unpack and analyse the themes that came up in the findings. “Pleased to meet you, pleased to eat your food” is an introductory piece that invites the reader to “a day in the field”. I introduce the reader to my participants, in an effort to share a part of each of their stories. Thereafter, I share my experience, in depth, of spending a day in one of my participant’s homes.

“Maintaining echoes of home” is a part of the chapter that uses memory as a lens through which I unpack the strategies employed by my participants to maintain and reinforce their identities from back home. Finally, “Renegotiating a new identity through food” is a section of the chapter that aims to conclude the findings, unpacks the balancing of old and new traditions, and is further separated into two parts that look at the individual and social challenges to balancing and renegotiating a new identity in the host land. Here, we get the chance to understand more of the factors at play in the migrant’s journey with food and in the host land.

1.5 Conclusion

From my study, I found that home was important to the identity of the migrant, both in maintaining and recreating it. I discovered that home meant different things to different people, and that not all experiences were positive. Food played an important role as it helped in memory-making and remembering, and finally, participants ended up creating a new identity in the host land that reflected both the new and old influences that they were exposed to. This differed from what I had initially assumed, which was that there would be a complete and total rejection of their “old” selves, or a complete and total rejection of the culture found in their host land. As I am a migrant myself I realise that this could affect my research through me relating and having shared some of the struggles and experiences my participants have faced but I have embraced this and have tried my best to allow their stories to speak for themselves throughout this paper.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

"Food for us comes from our relatives, whether they have wings or fins or roots. That is how we consider food. Food has a culture. It has a history. It has a story. It has relationships" - Winona La Duke

2.1 Introduction

Food plays an important role in the story of the lives of all people. Our first encounters with food are in the home, and these aid in shaping our food cultures and experiences. Food plays a significant role in several, if not all, cultural groups; not only to help define social boundaries, but more so in creating identities (Plaza, 2014). "Food is significant because it holds meanings that are at once deeply symbolic, sensuous, psychological, social, and cultural" (Plaza, 2014: 469). Counihan (2004), when speaking on her work in Florence, speaks of how food can be used as a voice, especially for individuals who have been historically silenced in a society. Women are an example of one group that has been "silenced" yet, are solely responsible for one of the most important tasks in households and communities, that is, cooking. Women are involved with the food process from the market to the home. Ellena and Nongkynrih (2017) echo this as they speak of how women's roles in society at large ultimately affect the food security and well-being of the family, especially that of the children within the said household, through some communities practicing subsistence farming, and also, through household food provision.

Furthermore, food has the ability to bring people together, but also acts as a way of separating "us" from "them". Food is an important part of identity, culture, home and belonging; especially more so in the lives of migrants whose daily lives and experiences are entangled in the identities of the host and homeland (Alder, 2015; Tookes, 2015; Bailey, 2016; Brown and Paszkiewicz, 2016). Diasporic communities, in particular, gravitate together due to their shared cultures in an otherwise unfamiliar host land. Here, memory plays a significant role as the culture from home can be kept alive through remembering recipes, as well as consuming, sharing and exchanging ethnic foods and traditions from the homeland (Duruz, 2010; Plaza, 2014; Abarca and Colby, 2016; Bailey, 2016). Although these exchanges are not solely built around food preferences, food has proven to be a big part of this, with there often being an exchange of ideas, recipes and memories around particular foods and tastes that contribute to the collective remembering of these groups (Counihan, 1998; Sutton, 2001; Linke, 2015). In this chapter, I will be

taking a deeper look into the themes that help shape the food narratives of migrants in their host countries. These themes are grouped under four major headings namely; “Migration”, “Home”, “Identity” and “Memory”.

2.1.1 Problematising Food in Our Globalised World

In the world of food, there is an existence of shared food cultures and the increased consumption of “exotic” foods, in that you will find people moving away from a strict consumption of their own cultural foods, and seeking out other culinary experiences (Nandy, 2004; Hirsch, 2011). Van Esterik (2008:12) shows a different side to this sharing or exchange of cuisines with what she refers to as “culinary colonialism”, which is when a country that was previously colonised now has culinary influences from the country that previously colonised it, and these have now been adopted as their own, and even vice versa. Undeniably, with the consumption of the other, there are often power struggles at play. Appadurai (1988) speaks of this power that was historically involved in the consumption of the other, by noting that preindustrial elites would often draw on the culinary techniques of others, their ingredients and sometimes even their cook, in a display of their political power and influence. These cuisines were intended to be a spectacle and, as a result, they went to great lengths to distance themselves from their places of origin (Appadurai, 1988).

Today, the power play is still present, but has taken on different forms; for example, food is now used as a social marker for success. An example of this is, if a neighbourhood has a Chinese restaurant or other popular ethnic cuisines, then it may be considered as being better than one which does not (Nandy, 2004). Because people are so driven towards the consumption of the other – and this is a trait synonymous with the middle to upper class – by having restaurants that offer unique experiences, these neighbourhoods attract trendy people. Trendy progressive communities are now the hub for exciting new spaces that allow the consumer to interact with cultures and cuisines outside of their comfort zone.

There is an undeniable element of the “other” when it comes to the consumption and experience of food; whether it is done in an effort to explore the “other”, or cover the gap between “us” and “them”. Hirsch (2011) speaks of how the food process cannot be detached from the individual experiencing it as, by consuming the food of another, you are making that food a part of you as you swallow it and internalise it – you are what you

eat. Hirsch (2011: 618) goes further and speaks of the concept of “eating the other”. This is the act of making ethnic food available for western consumption, and this can either be done as a way of asserting “white” power, or as a way of overcoming “white” prejudice. Whatever the case may be, this is seen as a way of benefiting “white” people.

Without entering too much into the debate of “white consumption”, we can instead speak of the selective cultural consumption of the “other”. This then brings into question the idea of stolen cultures, where one group appropriates the cuisine of another and claims it as their own, as seen in Hirsch’s study around *hummus* (2011). Heldke (2012) speaks of what she calls “cultural food colonialism” – which is not to be confused with Van Esterik’s (2008) earlier mentioned “culinary colonialism” – where, as part of being adventurous with food, people would serve or consume food from exotic places around the world and serve to feed the yearning for a novel experience; in essence, picking and choosing the aspects of another’s culture in order to feed the adventurer within oneself. Heldke (2012) even brings to mind how cookbooks always promise the reader the opportunity to learn how to prepare this “ethnic” cuisine. Duruz (2009: 46) refers to this “desire to literally consume difference through appropriating others’ food and traditions as ‘exotic’ ” as “consumer cannibalism”. Although this might seem like a harsh assessment of the adventurous consumer, this selection seems to take only the desired aspects of another’s cultural norms; a form of picking and choosing, or cultural shopping, for one’s enjoyment. The sections to follow will further unpack the entangled relations between food, people and identity.

2.2 Migration

To begin this story of migrants and their journey through their host land, we must first begin by talking about migration. In our world today, and more so in the world of food, there is a growing trend of mixed food cultures. This is largely due to globalisation; there is a peaking interest in the food of the other (Mintz and Du Bois, 2002) but, another important factor behind this exchange, sharing and mixing of food cultures is migration. We see shifts of populations across the globe, seeking better conditions for work and/or refuge. There are many reasons why an individual might migrate. Van Hear (2010) makes a distinction between voluntary migration and forced migration. Voluntary migrants are individuals who leave a particular area for economic or labour related reasons, whereas forced migrants have been displaced and forced into exile. In some cases, migrants can

even fall under both categories (Van Hear, 2010). Both forms of migration can result in temporary or more permanent moves.

With these geographical moves, so too do cultures move into these new areas, with a huge aspect of these cultures being food cultures. Previously, research on migration has primarily looked at the experiences of migrants in the new area, and the responses of their host nations to their presence, without particularly looking at the role of food in the migrant's journey (Brown and Paszkiewicz, 2016). The work of Brown and Paszkiewicz (2016) highlights just how much of an influence food has on the settlement of migrants, by looking at how Polish migrants managed to adjust in the United Kingdom. Migrants in the study found the move to a new country to be very stressful and lonely, and often sought out familiar tastes in an effort to deal with this difficult time. Upon arrival, they would find the closest cheap substitutes to the food that they were used to, until they could afford to buy food from home; thus, showing how food and emotions are linked, and how often food provides comfort for the lonely migrant (Brown and Paszkiewicz, 2016).

Ainslie (1998) as quoted by Plaza (2014), speaks of how often migrant populations may experience what is known as "cultural mourning", when they live amongst groups where they are "othered", and are no longer amongst their loved ones and the community that helped to shape and sustain who they are, along with the nuances of their own culture. During this adjustment journey, the migrant deals with the realisation of many losses; from having been removed from their loved ones, to also having been removed from the familiar "inseparable" gems of their world, such as the food cultures, music and art that have all played a part in shaping their worldview (Plaza, 2014). In an effort to cope with this loss, migrants build communities and find ways of bridging the emotional gaps that are created by the loss that they have faced (Winnicott, 1969). These communities are referred to as diasporic communities.

2.2.1 Diasporic Communities

One result of migration is that of diasporic communities in the host country. Work on the diaspora in the field of anthropology has been of interest since the 1960s, through the work of Glazer and Moynihan (1963), with work on migration dating even further back to the work of Franz Boas in the 1920s (Ybarrola, 2012). Put simply, diasporic communities are made up of individuals who all come from the same country and are brought together by their shared cultures (Plaza, 2014; Alder, 2015; Bailey, 2016). Together, they share

aspects of their culture and help each other in creating a home away from home, until they can return to their country of origin. Among these shared aspects of culture, food plays a vital role. Food is not only often used as a way of bringing people together, but also as a way of separating oneself from others and, as a result, communities are built around, and reinforced through, food (Brown, 2016).

Plaza (2014) looks at how Caribbean people have always travelled with their culture and have managed to build strong Caribbean diasporas in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada since the 1960s. Although they are not home, they have managed to "recreate familiar social spaces, such as 'West Indian' grocery stores, fast food and fine dining restaurants, clothing stores, hair styling salons, and music shops" (Plaza, 2014: 463). In addition to this, when individuals are living in the diaspora, they will often try to visit home, as this not only allows them to visit past tastes, but also helps them in building and reaffirming their identity (Alder, 2015).

Finally, the most common way in which diasporas reinforce their identity is through food. Tookes (2015) speaks of how food is a crucial factor within the Barbadian community in conveying identity. Food in the diaspora was important when migrants needed to differentiate themselves from people in the host land, and it also demonstrated solidarity amongst members of the diasporic community (Tookes, 2015). On the other hand, Duruz (2009) speaks of an imagined Asia that is found in the kitchens of the West, that is much more "exotic than their typical Sunday roast" and is intended for diasporic and touristic digestion. Here, food in the diaspora is intended to fill the gap where there is "a curiosity for the unfamiliar and traces for the homely, comforting reassurance of close relationships and familiar spaces (Duruz, 2009: 45). Traditional foods play an important role in this reinforcement (Brown, 2016), but Tookes (2015) notes that these traditional foods often have to be reinvented in the diaspora for varying reasons; for example, because of limited ingredients or dietary habits, but this happens with restrictions. "The revised dishes are not new and different foods, but rather continue to expand and embody the canon of the traditional, and reinforce Barbadianness" (Tookes, 2015:65).

Therefore, migrants connect themselves to home through the consumption of food that is familiar to them whilst they are in the host land and, in addition to this, through engaging with other members in the diaspora and consuming any and all available, familiar material from home. This phenomenon will be referred to within the study as, "shopping the culture".

2.2.2 Consuming Culture

The title of this section is heavily influenced by the work of Mankekar (2002), who looks at the commodification of culture, what she refers to as “retailing the culture”. She speaks of how stores cater to the Indian diasporic community in San Francisco by recreating India for an Indian experience, not only by providing food from home, but by dressing the part, playing music from India and even selling Bollywood movies in their stores (Mankekar, 2002).

Where diasporic communities are present, there is often an emergence of stores that offer glimpses of home through the food, music and other recognisable material from back home. Store owners, in this way, provide a space in which migrants can feel at home by being afforded the chance to consume materials from home, whilst being surrounded by people who are like them (Mankekar, 2002). As much as store owners are capitalising on the migrant’s need to consume the material from home, they serve a purpose of making home more accessible. The relationships that store owners share with their customers, being aware of popular trends and products from back home, which regions to cater for and where to source products from these areas, are some of the roles that storeowners hold in diasporic communities (Mankeker, 2002). Although some storeowners are also migrants themselves, some local storeowners also capitalise on the influx of migrants by supplying goods from different regions of the world to cater for the diasporic populations in the host country (Mankekar, 2002; Plaza, 2014; Rabikowska and Burrell, 2016).

Often, with this, the value of the goods that are sold increases, due to the fact that the goods are not readily available, even with people buying goods that they normally would not have bought back home (Mankekar, 2002; Rabikowska and Burrell, 2016). The idea of the commoditisation of culture works so well, because people are constantly drawn to the nostalgia that is evoked by those smells in the marketplace that echo past times, music that they grew up with and can relate to, and finally, food that looks like what their mothers, grandmothers and many before them served within their homes (Makekar, 2002).

This is not only limited to the Indian community (Mankekar, 2002), but is seen across many other migrant groups, where the familiar is recreated through grocery stores, salons, restaurants, music shops, etc. These places were created to give patrons an authentic experience of whichever region they represented (Plaza, 2014; Rabikowska

and Burrell, 2016). These places then thrive on the patrons' imagination; through the consumption of these "authentic" experiences, meaning is created, and the region is further defined (Mankekar, 2002; Plaza, 2014). How these shops are marketed to consumers is geared primarily towards ensuring that they profit through catering to the hunger within the consumers. "In virtually all Trinidadian diaspora locations, *roti* shops typically position themselves as an authentic 'third space' location that provides a reprieve from a 'hunger' and yearning for a gastronomic passage to back home' " (Plaza, 2014: 465). Diasporic communities are dependent on food and nostalgic experience in order to keep their culture alive in the unfamiliar place that is the host land.

2.3 Home

Home has often been perceived as a stable location for the self, and a place of comfortable knowledge (Torresan, 2001). Due to this perception, where home is stable and static, doing anything that moves you outside of the home base then suggests that you need to come back and fix or re-centre yourself at home (Torresan, 2001). In addition to this, work that has been done on the idea or concept of home has previously looked at home as something that was binary; meaning that it had to be a physical or symbolic space. Therefore, if home was one thing, then it could not be the other, but unfortunately, the idea of home is a much more complex field with numerous layers, and ultimately is a field that migrants constantly have to navigate through (Andits, 2015).

Home changes form depending on where you are and your relationship to it. Some even have multiple ideas of home, and all these factors change depending on the individual. According to Abarca and Colby (2016: 1), "[H]ome is not made by its geographic placement, but rather by the memories, food memories that are tied to it which offer cultural grounding". Andits' (2015) study looks at first-generation Australian-Hungarians in an effort to understand migrants' perceptions of home. This group of migrants had developed an isolated "deterritorialised" sense of Hungary, which was fuelled and nurtured by their imagination and memory and, once home suddenly became accessible, their idea of home was far from binary, but instead, there were several nuances that differed across individuals and situations (Andits, 2015). The migrants from Andits' study had plural notions of home, which hung in a balance of tensions. What is important to note is that home, as often stated, does not always elicit feelings of belonging in every person; the feeling of belonging is only one reaction to an otherwise complex situation (Andits, 2015). Rather than being stable and fixed, home is ambiguous, fluid and ever

changing. For the purposes of this research, the word home will be used to describe three settings, namely; their homeland, their childhood home and the homes that they are now recreating in the host land.

2.3.1 From Ritual to Habit

Our first interactions with food originate from the home and this, in turn, plays a role in the shaping of our culinary preferences, be it in a positive or negative way. From here, even our culinary practices and food habits are shaped by elements such as when to eat, how to eat and what to eat, as well as there being food for a particular occasion, certain ways of preparing food and even rituals around food (Mead, 1943; Bynum, 1985; Appadurai, 1988; Goody, 2008). Our food habits are imparted on us as children and are an important feature of one's culture; although many aspects of our culture may fade with each generation, "food is the strongest and sometimes only surviving aspect of culture" (Alder, 2015: 205).

These food habits become especially important to migrants once they leave the homeland, as there are very few ways of reinforcing those parts of their culture, if at all. Losing traditional culinary practices for many immigrants is equated with the "abandonment of community, family, and religion" (Gabaccia 1998: 54) so, not only is there pressure from the individual, but there are also societal pressures for one to maintain their cultural food habits. Food has the power to ground us in place and, at the same time, through memory, it helps us transcend our present moment. Gabaccia (1998: 56) asserts that, "to eat the familiar home food is to be at home, at least in the heart, as well as the stomach". This is echoed by the work of Abarca and Colby (2016) which asserts that food memories create a sense of home, and then this sense of home comes together with those memories, and they become the flavours of their cultural identity in the host land.

In Plaza's (2014) study, we see how the practice of consuming *roti* and *doubles* in Trinidad while growing up had resulted in a deep psychological imprinting in how migrants living away from home perceive, relate, consume and imagine a sense of "home". Traditional foods and foodways thus serve as a way to ease the difficulty and stress associated with migration and life changes. As both the consumption and sharing of food are deeply social, our early food socialisation leaves deep marks in the ways that we perceive, relate

to, consume, and imagine a sense of "home" in the world (Plaza, 2014). Food is intrinsically important to the migrant's experience of everyday life.

2.3.2 On "Good" and "Bad" Food

Access to food is an important theme to look at, as this also influences perceptions of what is good and bad food, with the assumption that good food is healthy, and bad food is unhealthy. There is a belief that the elite have access to a wider variety of foods that are not only better, but are also healthier. Nandy (2004) argues against this and says that this is what we have been led to believe but, if anything, the elite just have access to well-marketed unhealthy foods. Along with this, people now feel less confident about what they put into their bodies, which has resulted in there being a growing trend in Western-influenced societies, of people hiring "experts" who can plan their meals and tell them what is right for them (Nandy, 2004). Engler-Stringer (2010:143) looks further into this issue of access, food and health, and notes a study which had shown that "diets based on lean meats, vegetables, and fruit tend to be associated with higher costs than energy-dense diets rich in added sugars and fats", which contradicts the statement made by Nandy (2004). This, unfortunately, is the reality that we face; unhealthy food, in most cases, is more affordable than healthy food. As a result, many low-income households struggle to provide balanced meals for their families due to the cost of these healthy foods (Engler-Stringer, 2010). On the other hand, there is a margin of the population that is not necessarily disadvantaged, but is actually unaware of what they are consuming, which is where some of the health issues arise (Engler-Stringer, 2010).

Another discourse around good and bad food is that of the familiar being perceived as good, and the unfamiliar being bad. In Wentworth's study (2017), one of his participants stated that, because rice was something that she ate every day, she could not see it as a bad thing. This is true, not only in this community, but in various communities, especially more so amongst migrant groups where the familiar is not only immediately good and sought after, but its value increases, especially once it becomes difficult to access (Mankekar, 2002). Through the work of Wentworth (2017), we see that locally grown food would be the preferred food choice, as it is perceived to be healthier; but because of the cost, the mothers settled for rice and canned meat which, although the meat was imported and heavily taxed, turned out to be cheaper. This then brings the conversation back to access where, although people may want healthier food or even be aware that what they are eating is an unhealthy meal, they are sometimes forced to eat those "unhealthy" foods

due to the cost of healthy food. This echoes the work of Brown and Paszkiewicz (2017), which notes how migrants would settle for cheaper food when first moving to a region, although they knew it was not that healthy, until they could afford food from back home that was better.

“Despite the financial limitations, participants across peri-urban and urban locations and with varying access to cash, define “good” food as island food, rather than processed food, and stressed the importance of balanced meals, repeating public health messages that state that a healthy meal consists of a starch with protein and vegetable” (Wentworth, 2017: 609). People are aware of what is healthy, although their food habits may not reflect that.

2.3.3 The Kitchen

When speaking of food within the home, we must speak of the hub in the creation and recreation of these meals: the kitchen. The kitchen, in many homes, is a fluid place where often a lot more than just cooking takes place. Wills *et al.* (2013), with their interesting study on kitchen practices, look at the complexity of kitchens, and how not everything that is done in the kitchen is about the actual food preparation or the consumption of food. Instead, other seemingly unrelated tasks such as cleaning, taking phone calls and the kitchen’s entanglement with everyday life are also taking place. We even find activities that would be termed as “kitchen activities” taking place in other areas of the house, such as the storing of food in other parts of the home (Wills *et al.,* 2013). The boundaries and layout of the kitchen often facilitate this fluidity between the kitchen and the rest of the home. To many, the kitchen is the most important room within the home as our food is made here, our first interactions with food take place here, and so too a great deal of socialisation and social learning is imparted in the kitchen due to it being such a fluid space.

In order to recreate meals, whether traditional or otherwise, there is an assumption that one must have the ability to cook. Food preparation across cultures differs and can be seen across the world, be it with the recipes that are being used, who is preparing the food, what ingredients are being used and even where the ingredients are being sourced from (Kearney, 2010). Food is used in cultural spaces and homes as a form of expression, in that there are different foods for different occasions, be it a funeral, wedding or even just the average day-to-day meals that are consumed (Civitello, 2011). Many relationships

in our social spheres are fostered on cooking, between those who can cook and those who want to learn how to cook (Trubek, 2000). These skills can be acquired formally or informally, that is, from your family or friends, or in a professional setting and, even better in the global age, through the various media streams (Engler-Stringer, 2010). Engler-Stringer (2010) notes that what someone cooks or how they do it is not necessarily an indication of the ability that one actually has, but there could be many factors influencing the decision made on what to cook, and instead, each case must be looked at individually.

Chenhall (2010) looks at ability differently, with a focus on how the lack of kitchen and food preparation skills, along with the availability of fast food and processed foods, is affecting the health of consumers, especially children from low-income households. Engler-Stringer (2010) notes that in Canada, even with cooking classes being offered, there is still an issue, and the reason why people are still unhealthy is that the skills that they are offered, along with the recipes, do not meet the standards set by the income that they actually have. Many of them cannot afford the healthy meals that are being prescribed for them, and so situation tailored skill courses would be more efficient (Engler-Stringer, 2010). Furthermore, Wills *et al.* (2013) speak about cleaning, and how although cleaning the space is seen to be so important, cleaning is simply a kitchen practice that fills in the gaps. So, its function is not only the removal of dirt, but it is also what you do whilst you are waiting for something that is cooking, or for a kettle to boil.

Another important aspect of the kitchen and food preparation has to do with who has the skill to cook. The division of labour within the kitchen is also dependant on this and is normally an indication of the power relations within the kitchen. The division of labour around mealtimes itself could cause tensions as, in most cultures, the planning and preparation of the meals are often left to the women in the family, more often the mother or wife (Appadurai, 1988; Simmons, 2010). This could cause conflict due to the fact that women might feel powerless, as this is what is always expected of them, or even have women trying to show their power within the space by cooking what they want and how they want it, even though this might not be what everyone else wants.

2.3.4 Staple foods

Within cultural groups, food traditions are maintained and passed on through generational recipes and even simply through being taught how to prepare certain foods. Thus, an important aspect of food cultures is that of staple foods. Staple foods are foods that are

consumed often within a cultural group and make up a large percentage of what is eaten by a group of people. Van Esterick (2008) explores the relationship that people have with their staple foods in her study in Southeast Asia. People will go to great lengths to acquire their staple food. Van Esterick (2008) speaks of how people valued rice way beyond its nutritional value and, although it was a difficult crop to maintain and grow, people were not deterred. Van Esterick, (2008) goes on further to speak of how often there are rituals tied to these staple foods, whether they are being offered up as offerings, or just used as part of the celebrations. There can be more than one staple food within a region, and different regions can share a staple food (Van Esterick, 2008; Hirsch, 2011) due to the mixing of cultures; whether it is through trade routes, or "culinary colonialism", as referred to by Van Esterick (2008). With staple foods, there can often be debates, especially when two different groups share the same staple food, as can be seen in Hirsch's (2011) study on *hummus*. Conversations often centre around the authenticity of the dish, which region prepares it better, along with who owns it (Hirsch, 2011). There is often a lot of pride associated with dishes or foods considered to be traditional foods.

With different groups, there are foods that are considered as staple foods. These are essentially foods that are synonymous with particular cultural groups. Often, staple foods are present in some way or form in most meals, as found with Wentworth (2017), where rice, the staple food, was abundant in meals and even ignored and instead, food was characterised based on what else was accompanying the rice. When characterising food according to "good" or "bad" and "healthy" or "unhealthy", it is also common to find that there is a bias in favour of the staple food. Therefore, it is often seen in a positive light (Wentworth, 2017), even to the point where meals are considered incomplete if the staple food does not feature on the plate. Staple foods are often weaved into recipes as a part of preserving the culinary traditions of a people. The next section will look at the importance of generational recipes amongst migrant groups.

2.3.5 Generational Recipes

Appadurai (1988) looks at cookbooks and how they "tell unusual cultural tales of complex civilisations". According to Appadurai (1988), they reflect the shift in culinary boundaries and culinary processes, along with the interactions of the household with its budget, the market and how domestic ideologies are structured. The existence of cookbooks is important as they show an effort to standardise kitchen practices, share and transmit culinary knowledge across generations and finally, provide a guide for the novice from

the market to the kitchen. According to Mc Michael (2004) as cited by Nandy (2004), with these age-old recipes, there are often political histories behind them which are “framed by class, cultural and empirical relations”, so these recipes reflect the power struggles of that era, specifically, who had the authority. Appadurai (1988: 6) agrees with this, as she draws on the work of Jack Goody, and notes that “as much as cookbooks reflect the technical and cultural elaboration we call cuisine, they are also indications of class and hierarchy”. This is expressed through the ingredients that are used; for example, in India, where the consumption of meat was attributed to a higher social standing and a move towards modernity (Nandy, 2004). This may be the case in this context, but across the world, meat consumption has been present for a long time (Kearney, 2010).

Appadurai (1988) goes on to look at how cookbooks allow for the exchange of culture; with groups not only being able to explore the tastes of another, but also going beyond that and serving as a representation of the other. This speaks of a culinary identity, which is rather exciting as, with that, comes flexibility and an allowance for one to choose what makes up this culinary identity. People are also, as a result of the use of cookbooks, almost challenged to keep up and acquire new culinary wares in an effort to keep up with current food trends (Appadurai, 1988). Appadurai (1988) speaks of how leftovers had started to be included in cookbooks, and how this changed them from being seen as a waste product, to a reasonable food source and, although in India the Hindu people were against the use of leftovers, it led to other authors even dedicating an entire book to leftovers. Hence, even within these growing trends of food, there is still some resistance amongst certain groups, but these just hint at food differences amongst people.

Recipes tie in with memory as they are often used in the home as an act of remembering (Appadurai, 1988). They are often tied to an individual and are recreated in an effort to feel closer to the individual/s, or even to recreate a memory or taste that is centred around that particular recipe. According to Berliner (2005: 200), memory is a social activity through which we register, retain and remember past events and experiences. These events are often remembered later, as they are relevant for later cultural formations.

2.3.6 Commensality

There has also been work done that looks at the relationship between food and community. Commensality is the sharing of food. With food, there are differences across cultures regarding how meals are shared at home; for example, in some cultures you find

that meals are shared by the family in the same space, whereas in western communities, often meals are had in front of the television (Wills *et al.*, 2013). Osella and Osella (2008) speak of food memory which brings "ritualised behaviours" into normal everyday life through the sharing of food, for example, over dinner. By bringing food into ritual settings, this, in turn, strengthens the ritual process and helps in facilitating the act of remembering. The sharing of food between people helps them in fostering and maintaining good relations and so, within communities, this idea of exchange can even be built into the culture and will be revered (Osella and Osella, 2008). Although meal sharing is often regarded in a positive light, Simmons (2010) speaks of how this is not necessarily the case across all groups, as that mealtime sharing can be seen as a negative and controlling space. This does happen, as during those meal-sharing moments, for example, you may find families addressing behavioural issues at the table, or even the forcing of certain foods on an individual could also contribute to the difficulty surrounded by meal sharing in families.

Beyond this, research has also shown that meal-sharing and home cooking play a great role in one's food culture (Simmons, 2010). Often, it is in the home that one has their first interaction with food, and this where an exploration, preference and taste for certain foods starts; essentially the beginning of one's food identity and journey. It is for this reason that Simmons (2010:16) states that, if home cooking declines, "the learning and teaching of food culture may shift from its traditional centre in the home towards the external food environments and marketing campaigns of the food industry". In the life of the migrant, through commensality, migrants experience a sense of community (Bailey, 2016). Through this sharing of meals, they undergo a process of collective remembering as they revisit familiar flavours and memories around eating that same food back home as a community (Osella and Osella, 2008). "The sharing of meals is especially important for migrant families, especially when ethnic foods are shared" (Alder, 2015: 207).

2.4 Identity

2.4.1 Identity: Personalities and Expression

Often with traditional food patterns and age-old recipes, there is not always room for the individual to express him or herself through their food, but Nandy (2004) has noted that, in recent years, there has been an emergence of food cultures as people are becoming more self-aware and not only subscribing to the way things have always been done. There

is a beauty in the expressiveness within the culinary practice (Hirsch, 2011). Even when working with traditional recipes, often individuals tweak the recipe to better suit their circumstances, taste and even their personality. While Nandy (2004) looks at the individuality of the individual within the kitchen, Wills *et al.* (2013) consider the uniqueness of the kitchen itself. Although cooking may take place in many kitchens, it is not the same, as each kitchen has its practices; what is acceptable for one is not necessarily acceptable to the next, and so it is important to look at each kitchen as an individual (Wills *et al.*, 2013). No two kitchens are identical, and again, this is a place where the individual can express themselves through the choices that they make within this place. Food is more than nutrition, but instead, is intimately linked to identity and social relations (Fischer, 2017). Vegetarianism and vegans have become important markers of identity politics (Fischer, 2017: 35).

2.4.2 Dual Identities

All migrants are faced with the same challenge; the negotiation of a new identity in the host land (Alder, 2015). Wright *et al.* (2001) demonstrated that people show their affiliation and disaffiliation with communities through their food preferences. In the work of Plaza (2014), we see Trinidadian immigrants altering, or better yet, adjusting to the new culture of the city; they are living in an effort to "renegotiate their identity". Many migrants go on this journey. They now have to fashion a new identity, as they encounter new experiences in this foreign land, which somehow encompasses both home and the new environment that they find they find themselves in (Plaza, 2014). "Immigrants often develop a bicultural identity through the process of acculturation" (Plaza, 2014). Plaza (2014) explains this bicultural identity as the individual keeping a strong ethnic identity, but at the same time adopting the culture of the new country that they are in.

Identity is not found in fixed places, but in people's stories and daily practices (Torresan, 2008). They now create a new identity that somehow manages to encompass multiple nations, and through their food practices, they are able to construct and express their multiple identities (Plaza, 2014). Food is a crucial way through which individuals are able to communicate their identity (Tookes, 2015). As migrants adjust to their host country, often their food practices will shift (Tookes, 2015). Some may try to change their food practices to mimic their host land in an effort to fit in. Often, there is a reinvention of traditional foods when in the host land, due to limitations in the ingredients available to them, or a change of dietary habits (Tookes, 2015: 65).

Food is central to identity creation and retention, and everyone has an identity. “What distinguishes migrants from others is that their identity is likely to be influenced and formed by the experience of migration, by living in the home and then host country or countries, or being brought up by parents who originate from another country (Alder, 2015: 206). Negotiating identity is part of every migrant’s journey and food plays a role in forming and maintaining identity (Brown, 2016).

2.5 Memory

There has been an increased focus on memory across the social sciences over the past 20 years, especially in the field of anthropology (Berliner, 2005). The term memory is used to refer to oral, visual, ritual and bodily practices through which a group’s collective remembrance of the past is reproduced and sustained (Linke, 2015). As memory refers to past lived experiences, some scholars are less interested in memory due to its vulnerability to human subjectivity, and therefore feel that it is unreliable (Berliner, 2005). Anthropologists have realised that these shared lived experiences are valuable in showing how people perceive their past from many varied perspectives (Berliner, 2005). “Memories about food simultaneously place us in the past and in the present, and often can create situations for recollections in the future” (Abarca and Colby, 2016: 1). Memory, simply put, aids communication between the past and the present (Sutton, 2001).

Memories are kept alive through the dishes that are made, and memories often influence what may be cooked in a home. Plaza (2014) found that Caribbean migrants that were living away from home tied specific food to specific memories. Food, and memories of this food, are then seen to play a vital role in the life of the migrant as they help reinforce positive feelings, events with family and friends, positive moments in life, as well as marking out important cultural traditions (Plaza, 2014). The consumption of ethnic foods becomes an act of social remembering; for example, in Plaza’s (2014) study, the consumption of *roti* and *doubles* became significant, as it highlighted important events from back home through the elicitation of memories associated with the consumption of the *roti* and *doubles*. Again, the role of grocery stores in the diaspora is shown to be a vital one in the elicitation and sharpening of these memories, by having a concentrated setting of culture through selling goods from home; together with creating the entire experience of being back home through dressing a particular way, and even down to the choice of music (Mankekar, 2002). “The label memory aims to grasp the past we carry,

how we are shaped by it and how this past is transmitted. Therefore, every little trace of the past in the present is designated as memory" (Berliner, 2005:201).

Groups can also have shared memories; these are referred to as collective memories. Collective memories are societies' memories which can be used as a tool for interaction with us and our environment and, in addition, allow it to reproduce itself through time; a remembrance of a stored past (Berliner, 2005; Sutton 2011). With this being the case, it becomes difficult to distinguish between memory and culture, if memory is everything that is transmitted across generations.

2.5.1 Memory As A Sense

Food has an interesting relationship with memory as, through its creation, smell and taste, it not only aids remembering, but the creation of memories themselves. According to Counihan (1998), food and memory are interconnected through food's centrality in everyday practices and rituals, and food in its structure across time helps in facilitating remembering. Through this, some academics have looked at memory as a sense (Sutton, 2011; Abarca and Colby, 2016). Memory should not be considered as something that is triggered by the senses, but as a sense itself (Abarca and Colby, 2016). Memory, as a sense in food studies, looks at the senses and memory as a communicative creative channel between the self and the world (Sutton, 2011). Sutton (2011) proposes *gustemology* as a way of documenting and experiencing food and culture, and states that life is a collaboration of the senses.

Abarca and Colby (2016: 4) carried out research that analysed food memory as a sense that redefined home and longing for home, and found the root of one's identity as an embodied experience; one that found its expression through various narrative forms. Food follows and expresses the flow of daily life and this therefore, makes it a great mnemonic (memory) aid (Sutton, 2011). Food, as a sense, allows for synaesthesia, the merging of the senses that are normally not connected; for example, tasting memories because the "cooking and eating of food is deeply sensory" (Sutton, 2011:469). Finally, "memory should be a focal point in our understanding of food" (Sutton, 2011: 470), as food leads to the unlocking of key personal and social memories.

2.5.2 Nostalgia

Migrants have a nostalgic feeling for home (Abarca and Colby, 2016). Grocery stores that offer foods from home often create feelings of nostalgia for migrants in their host country, by not only selling the goods from back home, but also recreating spaces that mimic those of home (Mankekar, 2002). Mankekar (2002) speaks of a "nostalgic gastronomy" as a way in which food is used a marker for cultural continuity or difference. There is also an aspect of brand name nostalgia, and this is when brands are marketed to the public and, because they are familiar, people are drawn to them, even if they are brands that they had not used previously (Mankekar, 2002). Nostalgia is especially present within migrant populations, with stores making sure to feed their longing for home by "retailing the familiar" and, although nostalgia is perceived to elicit positive emotions in most cases, this is not always the case and does not always result in a longing for home (Mankekar, 2002).

2.5.3 Comfort Foods

Memories are often tied to comfort foods as, with remembering, there are often feelings of sadness and longing, and so food comes in to fill that emotional gap (Plaza, 2014). According to Spence (2017: 105), "comfort food refers to those foods whose consumption provides consolation or a feeling of well-being. Foods, in other words, that offer some sort of psychological, specifically emotional, comfort". Comfort foods are often associated with memories and cooking from home, along with that they are typically simple meals that have been shared with loved ones, and may even have echoes of one's childhood, thus making them sentimental (Spence, 2017). Favourite foods from one's childhood will often transform into being comfort foods, and these foods are often linked to a positive time, feeling or person in the individual's life (Spence, 2017); for example, the pancakes your father used to make.

Feelings of loneliness and stress are often associated with comfort eating. People who tend to be alone consume more comfort foods than those who have company (Spence, 2017). Comfort eating is an emotional exercise. Whether the consumption is driven by an emotion – sadness, stress or loneliness – or the eating of comfort foods thereafter leads to an emotional feeling of guilt (Spence, 2017). However, not all comfort eating is associated with an insecure attachment, as comfort food offers and fulfils the need for "belongingness" for people who are in secure emotional attachments (Troisi *et al*., 2015).

The idea of comfort eating was first seen in print in the 1960s when it was used to address issues of obesity and here, it was perceived as being negative (Spence, 2017). It therefore, comes as no surprise that comfort eating is associated with being unhealthy.

Culture, gender and age all play a role in what individuals consider to be comfort foods. People from different regions consider different foods to be comfort foods based on what they were fed when they were growing up, for example, with fast food (Spence, 2017). Another factor that played a role with regards to what people were eating was emotional eating, and the reasons behind the emotional eating – "loneliness, depression, and guilt – were all found to be key drivers of comfort eating for women, whereas the men questioned typically reported that they ate comfort food as a reward for success" (Spence, 2017: 106). Also, according to Spence (2017), the older people were, the more likely they were to report the comfort food/s as having a positive effect on them, and the author lends this to the fact that the older you get, the more likely you are to focus on positive feelings, whether it is from memory or current situations.

Typically, comfort foods are unhealthy and high in calories but, for a select few, this is not the case. When considering comfort foods, warmth, saltiness, sweetness and softness have come up as popular qualities for comfort foods as opposed to harsher tastes (Spence, 2017). Colour also played a part, as Spence (2017) notes that it is hard to think of a green comfort food, as people often have an aversion to vegetables that stems from childhood; green does not scream tasty. Some comfort foods offer comfort in the sense of providing a feeling of belonging, as seen with the Trinidadians who consume *roti* and *doubles* as a way of maintaining symbolic boundaries of identification, and representing themselves as "authentically Trinidadian" (Plaza, 2014: 464). According to Henry (1994) as cited by Plaza (2014: 465), "consuming *roti* and *doubles* as comfort foods gives many Trinidadians in the diaspora a reprieve from feelings of alienation and marginalisation in cities like New York, Toronto, London, or Miami, which are often hostile to them because they represent the "other" (Henry 1994).

"So, to the extent that comfort foods work, that is, that they provide some kind of *neuropsychopharmacological* benefit or boost, at least to a certain sub-section of the population. It is not so much a matter of elevating people from out of a bad mood, as priming thoughts of prior positive social encounters, when exposed to a belongingness threat" (Spence, 2017: 108), as seen with the above-mentioned example.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that there is often an undeniable element of the other in the consumption of food. Food is sometimes used as a way of separating “us” from “them” and reinforcing identity, which is especially important in the life of the migrant. When migrants leave their homeland, they often struggle and may experience what is referred to as a “cultural mourning”. In an effort to cope with the feelings of loss, migrants will often seek or build communities with migrants just like them. These communities are referred to as diasporic communities, and they help in reinforcing identity and allow for the consumption of the familiar from back home. In the migrant’s life, home is not held by its geographic location, but by memories; food memories. The home is of great importance in the life of the migrant as this is where food is first experienced. Through eating food from home, home is not only remembered, but it becomes closer and more accessible. These experiences of food in the homeland help in shaping one’s identity and this too is carried to, and recreated in, the host land. Food is intimately linked to identity creation and retention.

Finally, from the work above, we see that memory serves an important function through remembering, as traditions can be kept alive and passed on from generation to generation. Food, through the senses, shares a unique relationship with memories as food helps in creating memories themselves. Food plays an incredible role in the life of the migrant as indicated above. The next chapter will look at the research methodology along with the methods that were used in the data collection process of this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

"You're never going to kill storytelling because it's built in the human plan. We come with it" - Margaret Atwood

3.1 Introduction

An ethnography was ideal for this research topic as it offered an insider's perspective on my participants' lives whilst, at the same time, through the research methods that were adopted, allowing me to delve into the layers of their lives. I conducted this research over a period of two years (most of this research took place over an eight month period) during which I held in-depth interviews with my participants, created kitchen mappings, collected food diaries from my participants and participated in the process of cooking. This research was born out of an interest to understand what role food played in the migrant's journey, with a focus on people living in Johannesburg. I set out to understand this by seeking out the food narratives of my participants and using the clues gathered from these narratives to understand their journey of settling in Johannesburg. I used my networks to gather participants from several countries; the majority of them being from African countries, although this was not a deliberate preference. The controls for my study were that they were all under 35 and had not been born in South Africa, but had later in their lives moved to South Africa. I chose to focus on the migrant's journey with food as I too am a migrant, and have found that food has played an important role in me not only settling in a new country, but also in keeping me connected with my Zimbabwean roots.

3.2 Study Setting

The fieldwork for this research was carried out in the city of Johannesburg in each of the participants' homes, as well as several grocery stores, thereby making my research multi-sited. Multi-sited research is research that is based in two or more locations; it differs from the traditional forms of ethnography, as this research requires the researcher to follow social phenomena which would otherwise not be able to be documented in one study setting (Fazlon, 2016). It was necessary for my research to be situated in several areas, as I was looking at different people and their interactions with food within their homes, and this would otherwise be difficult to document. Falzon (2016: 1) summarises this by stating that "the essence of multi-sited research is to follow people, connections, associations and relationships across space". Since the cooking of food has many

experiences and flows to it such as shopping experiences and its preparation, I wanted to follow the flow of the cooking from inception to conclusion, and so this reiterated the underpinnings of my research for this study.

3.2.1 Johannesburg

The city of Johannesburg is located in the province of Gauteng and is a vibrant, multicultural city, and with its history as a mining town and an estimated wealth of US$276 billion (IOL, 2018), it is no surprise that it not only is the richest city in South Africa, but also on the entire continent of Africa itself. As a result, there is a constant influx of people moving to the city, not only from other cities in South Africa, but also from around the world, seeking employment opportunities and better standards of living. In a report conducted by STATS SA (2018), it was shown that there was an expected number of 1,02 million migrants moving to South Africa between 2016 and 2021, of which almost 50% (47,5%) would move to Gauteng. With my interest in migration and the role that food plays in it, Johannesburg became my first choice due to the diversity in cultural backgrounds, as well as the large numbers of migrants that could be found within the city.

3.2.2 In the Field

The fieldwork was carried out in the homes of my participants, as well as the shops where they conducted their shopping, as I was documenting where they source their ingredients as well. Firstly, I chose to conduct the research in each of my participants' homes, as I felt that the relationship between home and food is an intimate one. I felt that this would better help me in understanding my participants, as I could then observe them in their own kitchens, preparing their own food. Beyond this, I wanted to understand the relationship that they shared with the space, their utensils, the ingredients and also other members, if any, in the household, and how this all came together to create a meal. The experience in their kitchen also allowed me to engage with them by assisting in the cooking process. I was also able to observe details that I normally would not have been able to observe, such as when items were cleaned, how the kitchen was arranged, the appliances that were used and how this all contributed to the creation of meals.

By tagging along on shop visits, I was able to explore another world, which is where they source their ingredients. As seen in the work of Mankekar (2002), mentioned in Chapter 2, shops are especially important in the life of a migrant, as they allow migrants access to home through the selling of ingredients, food and other familiar brands, and ultimately,

allowing shoppers to consume aspects of their culture that they are familiar with from back home in the diaspora. The shops ranged from places that I was familiar with, such as the local Woolworths or Pick n Pay, to shops that sold food exclusively from particular regions of the world. The shop visits were mainly observations of where they shopped, how they shopped and how they interacted with other people at these various locations. The next section takes a closer look at my participants and who they are.

3.3 Research Participants

I had ten young professionals from different parts of the world as my participants for my research, all of whom were between the ages of 25 and 35 and had moved to South Africa to further their education or seek better employment opportunities. They all had varying backgrounds and were from different parts of the world, such as Spain, Netherlands, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Kenya. Out of the ten participants that I had, there were seven females and three males. I sourced my participants through the use of people in my own network, who led me to other potential participants through the use of the snowballing method (Naderifar, Goli and Ghaljaie, 2017). In a way, I found myself in a complicated position as, being a migrant myself, I knew a few people in several other migrant groups and therefore, I served as my own gatekeeper. Through my being a foreign national as well, I found that it was easier to gain rapport with other migrants, as I was one of them too.

3.3.1 Selection and Recruitment of Participants

All of my participants lived in Johannesburg at the time of the study, and the research took place at their various homes, in addition to the grocery store visits. I set out to purposefully gather my participants, with the help of key informants, by seeking out people that I knew and additionally relying on referrals from people within my community and social circles. In this way, the study made use of snowball sampling by using my networks to seek out key informants and thereafter, using their networks and referrals to find me more participants (Bernard, 2011; Naderifar, Goli and Ghaljaie, 2017). The main idea was to find individuals who had moved to South Africa, male or female, who did the cooking in their households to see, not only what the individual was cooking, but instead, how the family, as a whole, was interacting with their kitchen space, as well as what influences they had from back home. I chose to focus on ten households that I would observe on two separate occasions; the first being a home visit where I would map their kitchen

space, observe as they cooked and got to understand who they and their household were. The second visit included a grocery store visit, where I could see where they got their ingredients from and then they would make a meal using these ingredients. Finally, my participants were asked to keep a detailed food diary for a period of two weeks, detailing what they consumed each day as well as the influences that their days had on these food choices.

In February 2018, I began making use of the snowballing technique. I had identified key informants from my networks and, from there, I was given access to other potential participants. Although not all of my participants knew each other in the end, this method of recruiting participants had introduced me to various people, all of whom were excited to be a part of this study. I began visiting prospective participants in their homes, informing them about the purpose of the research and its aims, as well what their participation would entail. This was the initial visit where I got to know them, where they were from and, in addition to this, I asked them a few fundamental questions about their household so as to get a better understanding of the dynamics within it. From there, ten participants were then randomly selected from the group. The chosen individuals were then asked about their willingness to participate in the study. I also tried to answer any questions that they had about the study and me; upon receiving a positive response, contact details were exchanged and dates and times for observation were negotiated, depending on their availability.

For this study, the criteria that were used in the selection of participants was firstly, that of age – they had to be between 25 and 35 years old – and, as previously mentioned, they had to have moved to South Africa after the age of 18, be it for study or work purposes. I targeted the youth in particular, as I myself fall within that age group and, through snowballing, this inevitably would be the age group that participated in this study. Aside from this, no restrictions were placed in the selection of participants.

At the end, 10 participants were a part of this study and their details and demographics are listed below:

Name (Pseudonym)	Country	Gender	Age	Years in South Africa	Profession
Estelle	Cameroon	Female	27	3	PhD Candidate
Rachel	Netherlands	Female	35	13	Lecturer
Sunny	Netherlands	Female	27	6 months	Graduate
Veronica	Cameroon	Female	30	8	Academic
Paida	Zimbabwe	Female	28	8	Self-Employed
Irene	DRC	Female	25	9	Engineer
Tanya	Zimbabwe	Female	27	7	PhD Candidate
Diego	Spain	Male	35	13	Accountant
David	Kenya	Male	28	4	Post-Graduate Student
Alex	Zimbabwe	Male	28	8	Lecturer

Table 1: Participant Demographics

During the participant selection process, I was open to anyone who was willing to be a part of the research process, as mentioned earlier. I noticed that, of the possible participants that I approached, males were more reluctant to have themselves documented within the kitchen. This was especially the case among the male Africans that I approached. Often, in traditional African households, cooking and, in fact, all kitchen activities, are seen as duties that are only for women within the home, and so typically, men would not be a part of the cooking process. Although I understood where they were coming from, having grown up in an African household myself, I had thought that this would not be a huge factor in 2017, especially amongst my peers; but, at a later stage, one of my female participants echoed the same sentiments as we were talking about who does what in the kitchen back home:

"…*Who? My father? He doesn't help, my brothers they can help, I don't know (laughs nervously)…my small brother sometimes you can give him garlic to peel, that's what I mostly ask him to do because I hate doing garlic…that's the only thing I know he is*

doing…because that's how the society is made, I can't say much because we grow up with the idea that the mum's doing the cooking and the father's not caring [about the cooking]…" (Estelle, participant, 2018).

This may have just been common with the group that I approached; I did not, however, continue to explore this, as this was not a deterrent or the focus of my research.

3.3.2 Key Informants

At the initial stages of this study, I set out to speak to people about my research in order to get an idea as to whether this topic was doable, and I was fortunate enough to meet two individuals, Tanya and Rachel. Bernard (2011) speaks of key informants as individuals who know a lot about their culture and are forthcoming with that information and want to help you, and this is exactly what Tanya and Rachel were for me. They not only helped me in finding more participants, but they were people I could speak to during the research journey and have them share their insights with me.

3.4 Ethnography

An ethnography is a research design that originated from social anthropology and is used today across the social sciences. Ethnographic research is a qualitative research method that falls under the school of interpretivism (Geertz, 1973; Bernard, 2011). Ethnographic researchers immerse themselves in the lives of their participants and are able to retell and interpret the lives with their participants (Bernard, 2006). Wolcott (1987), in speaking of ethnography, states that ethnography is not simply making use of techniques such as participant observation, nor is it about offering good descriptions or spending lengthy amounts of time in the field; instead, ethnography is centred in cultural interpretation. With this in mind, I chose to conduct ethnographic research to explore my participants' food narratives in an effort to best expose all the nuances that were in each of their stories. The value of ethnography lies in it allowing the researcher to immerse oneself and mirror the lives of the participants, therefore giving me, the researcher, an insider's perspective on their experiences and stories.

By adopting an ethnographic approach, I was given a perspective into my participants' lives that was unimaginable. There is great value in being able to be in the field, to listen and observe; but more importantly, with participant observation, to be embodied in the lives of my participants and to attempt to tell their story from how they see it. I took on this

approach to best tell the story of each of my participants while, at the same time, gaining a better understanding of life in their kitchens and how this tied in with their idea of home. My aim with this research was to observe my participants “in nature”, so to speak, and the best way to do this was through observing them in the kitchens preparing their meals, and also in the shops that they frequented in order to create these meals. This would help to better understand their stories by experiencing it with them along the way. Howes (2006: 121) sets a challenge that, as anthropologists, we should use our senses to connect in the field, as well as in the retelling of the story; instead of practising participant-observation, we should instead participate in “participant sensation”. I tried to keep this in mind in the field, especially when taking notes, to not only use “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973), but to go further and allow the senses to make it that much richer through describing tastes, smells and my surroundings whenever possible.

I wanted to offer an accurate depiction of these kitchens that I had a chance to visit and delve deeper into how their journey with food has transformed from what it was when they were in their homeland, to now, where they find themselves in a foreign land. Ethnographic research afforded me the opportunity to use this close interaction with my participants to tap into all of their food experiences and gain an understanding from the way that each of them experienced food, this new environment ,and everything that came as a part of the journey of settling into Johannesburg.

3.4.1 Developing Rapport and Gaining Trust

Prior to the commencement of this study, I made sure to sit with the participants that had been chosen and go through the consent form, which I had designed, with them (refer to Appendix 1). This was done in order to detail what they could expect from the research experience while, at the same time, making sure to address any concerns or questions that they might have early on in the research process.

I wanted to learn and understand the food narratives of each of my participants. Hence, I chose to focus on the kitchen within the home, as this is the space where cooking takes place and so therefore, I would be able to observe their food practices. This allowed me to gain an understanding of the various kitchens by seeing what was going on within them, as well as the meanings that were attributed to the spaces and the actions within those spaces. Although a kitchen may not often receive a lot of attention, besides being a space where food is made, or worse, still being seen as just another room in the house, so much

interaction takes place within the space, as I found out within the field. At different times of the day, the space would go through several transformations, changing it from just being an ordinary room or space within the house, to a place where different activities took place. Within different homes, the kitchen would go through different transformations; from a place where cooking took place, conversations were had, homework was done, meetings were had, meals were shared and so on. Even the interactions with their kitchen appliances were of significance with regards to what they had, when they were used, as well as how they were used. My research often took me beyond the kitchen; be it to the corner shop for items that were urgently needed, or larger shopping trips that were done once a month, and even a visit to a friend and so on. Essentially, I mirrored my participants in their daily lives in an effort to understand some of their food behaviours and interactions with food, even outside of their kitchens. On these trips, conversations were had and were often recorded to be later analysed.

On the first day of research, with each of the participants, I was taken on a tour of their kitchens, and this helped me to mentally catalogue the layout of the kitchen; which appliances were visible, if there was a sink ,or running water, or a table etc. In addition to mentally cataloguing what I saw, I then made rough sketches of the kitchens. Sacrificing the artistry of the sketch, I instead opted for taking in as many details as possible of how the kitchen was laid out, what appliances were present and where they were placed, marking out exits, entrances and windows etc. In addition to the sketches, I also made sure to take photographs of the kitchens, noting as much detail as possible, to help supplement the kitchen maps. The photographs also helped in documenting the cooking process and some of the food that was made.

On these tours, participants became relaxed as they showed off their kitchens and food with pride. Talks ranged from when they had moved to the particular areas where they stayed, what had drawn them to the area and how they planned out their kitchens. In some homes, I was shown the difference between ordinary cutlery and cutlery that was only used on special occasions, as well as which items to avoid, as they were someone's "special cup" and so on. This subsequently led to explanations of whom an individual item had been inherited from, or even who would eventually inherit what the participant has amassed throughout their life. Although this ultimately did not end up being an important factor in my study, as there were several themes raised, this went a long way in terms of building rapport between the participants and I.

3.4.2 The Self as a Gatekeeper?

My research, as previously mentioned, was multi-sited and, although this came with flexibility and excitement when going out into the field, it came with some challenges; one of them concerning a gatekeeper. A gatekeeper, by definition, is an individual that gives the researcher access to an institution or community (Singh and Wassenaar, 2016) where one would otherwise not have access. Having a gatekeeper present not only helps in navigating unfamiliar places, but also helps with access, as the gatekeeper is typically a known individual to the community. In the case of my study, because I did not have one set community that I was targeting, I had to negotiate access to each home that I wanted to access. I relied mostly on the networks that I had built over the years, and this allowed me to gather my initial participants and, from there, I used the relationships that I was forming in the field to meet other potential participants.

As a migrant myself, I had, over the years, met other migrants in the different places that I frequented and therefore, I had access to many potential participants. So, although I had no set gatekeeper assisting with issues of gaining access, by definition, I could then be referred to as a gatekeeper in my own research. After all, I had used my networks and relationships to help me navigate around issues of access and managed to gain entry into the field largely on my own.

This is not to say that it was easy. In fact, I believe that having had a gatekeeper would have made the entire process somewhat easier; especially having someone to vouch for me to my participants that I was someone that they could trust. I tried my best to answer all of the participants' questions and quiet all of their concerns. Where I had assumed that people would feel more comfortable with research taking place in their homes, I had failed to realise that the home, aside from offering comfort, can also be a vulnerable place to bring in an outsider, better yet one who is conducting research. As their homes were a reflection of themselves, I had to remind myself to be sensitive and be mindful of my actions, lest I offended them.

3.5 Research Methods

With "food narratives" being at the core of my research, I set out to find research methods that would best tell the story of each participant. With each research method, I wanted to be as open and natural as possible, to help in building rapport and having my participants be comfortable enough to share their experiences with me. The aim was for this to happen

naturally, but so too to leave space for the themes that I had not considered to be uncovered as part of the process (Bernard, 2011). Below is a detailed look into each of the research methods that I utilised for this study. Although there were overlaps with the techniques that I used, I chose these methods as they allowed me to capture as much data as possible using different mediums, without personally trying to infer any meaning from things, as well as not only being sold on what my participants wanted me to see. This allowed me to go beyond witnessing what my participants said that they did in the kitchen and instead, actually see for myself what they were doing and why (Wills *et al*., 2013). By gaining all of this information, I was in a better position to look at their lives and unpack their experiences.

3.5.1 Observation and Participant Observation

With the goal behind ethnographic research being to be present, and allowing myself, as a researcher, to experience what was before me, I made use of the following ethnographic methods: participant observation and observation (Bernard, 2011; Pelto, 2013).

Participant observation, as Bernard (2011) states, involves being present in people's everyday lives and experiencing what they go through, in an effort for them to grow comfortable with your presence, and therefore, allow you to record and observe aspects of their lives. For my study, participant observation allowed me to partake in the making of the food, the grocery shopping and even just being present in their lives to participate in their everyday living. It brought to life the recipes that had been mentioned in prior interactions, and I got to see how home and home foods were recreated within each of their kitchens. In addition to this, I was able to see how my participants interacted with other members within their household, for those who lived with family or friends. With each meal that I was invited to share, I not only experienced different flavours – some familiar and some foreign – but more so the pride that they had in displaying a meal. Participant observation and observation went hand in hand, as I found myself taking mental notes of the kitchens and my surroundings, even in the middle of meal preparation.

The only drawback that I faced was that of reactivity, as mentioned by Pelto (2013). I ran the risk of participants not acting how they normally would, as my presence would alter how they acted, or even what they ate, in an effort to impress me. I found that, even with people that I had known for years, conversations immediately became formal when

speaking of my research. This changed over time and with us building rapport and them trusting me; conversations began to flow better and were almost effortless.

3.5.2 Field Notebook

For my jottings, sketches and notes, I kept a field notebook with me at all times. This helped me in taking down details in the field that might otherwise have been missed, such as the sensory experiences – whether it was taste or smell – as well as what was occurring in my surroundings. I was clear with my participants about how I would be taking notes and, because I was telling their story, most participants seemed comfortable with this, seeing it me paying attention to detail, and so thankfully, I did not have to conceal it. For the grocery store visits, I carried with me a smaller, more discreet notebook, as recommended by Pelto (2013) because, whereas my participants were aware of my note-taking and were comfortable with it, other shoppers, and even shopkeepers, may not have understood,. Therefore, I chose a more discreet notebook as it would just like a shopping list.

My field notebook was large enough for me to draw in, but I would also take note of my feelings along the way. On days when I was unwell, or if I felt uncomfortable, I would note it down, and I later found that this helped me when writing my reflections. In many respects, my field notebook served as my diary as well. Note-taking helped to add colour to my observations, and I noticed that some participants had become so invested in the research process that they would tell me to take notes just before they said something that they considered to be important.

The only drawback that I faced with this research technique was how it was hard to capture all the details at once, as there was sometimes too much going on or, in instances where I was required to help with the preparation of the food, I would not be able to do what was required and take notes at the same time. In these instances, I would have to make mental notes and then later reflect on the moments I could not capture whilst in the field.

3.5.3 Conversations

For the purpose of this study, I used the word “conversations” to refer to informal interviews. I found the word conversation to be a more accurate description, as I simply carried out several conversations around food throughout the research process with my participants. By using the word “conversation” as opposed to interviews, I found that

participants were more forthcoming and comfortable with sharing information. Much like with a friend or an acquaintance, I wanted to have conversations about their lives, not only here in Johannesburg, but also back home; about the food they liked, the challenges that they faced and whatever else that they wanted to share. I found that, instead of limiting myself by asking a set of questions and risking the loss of information through having a structured interview process, I would keep these conversations going throughout the course of my research and allow them to share their stories the way that they wanted to (Bernard, 2011).

Informal interviews (conversations) are flexible in that they allow participants to share their stories and experiences concerning food and their relationship with it, and how this all came to be. I found that this was particularly valuable to me, as this was when we got to speak about their recipes and where they came from. Here, I got a glimpse into the participants' life experiences and their family history, as well as how, even with these passed on traditions, they managed to express their individuality. Often, it was also within these conversations that I got a glimpse into what their attitudes towards certain foods, ways of cooking, home and their host land were; showing me how their kitchen practices developed, as well as why and how their experiences shaped them. These conversations gave an in-depth view of the participants of what the defining moments in their lives were. It is through these conversations that I really got to know who each of my participants were.

In moments where there were lulls in conversation, I used some of the probing techniques, as detailed by Bernard (2011); most of which included echoing the participants or using verbal cues like "uh-huh". I tried to be myself and found that, in some periods of silence, sharing some of my story as a migrant triggered a memory, or even just made me more accessible, and therefore, they felt more comfortable sharing their story, as it did not feel like an interview. With each fieldwork experience, I also came to appreciate silence and learn that silence was not a bad thing; sometimes, managing the silence correctly not only gave me a chance to gather my thoughts, but participants would volunteer information I had not thought to ask (Bernard, 2011).

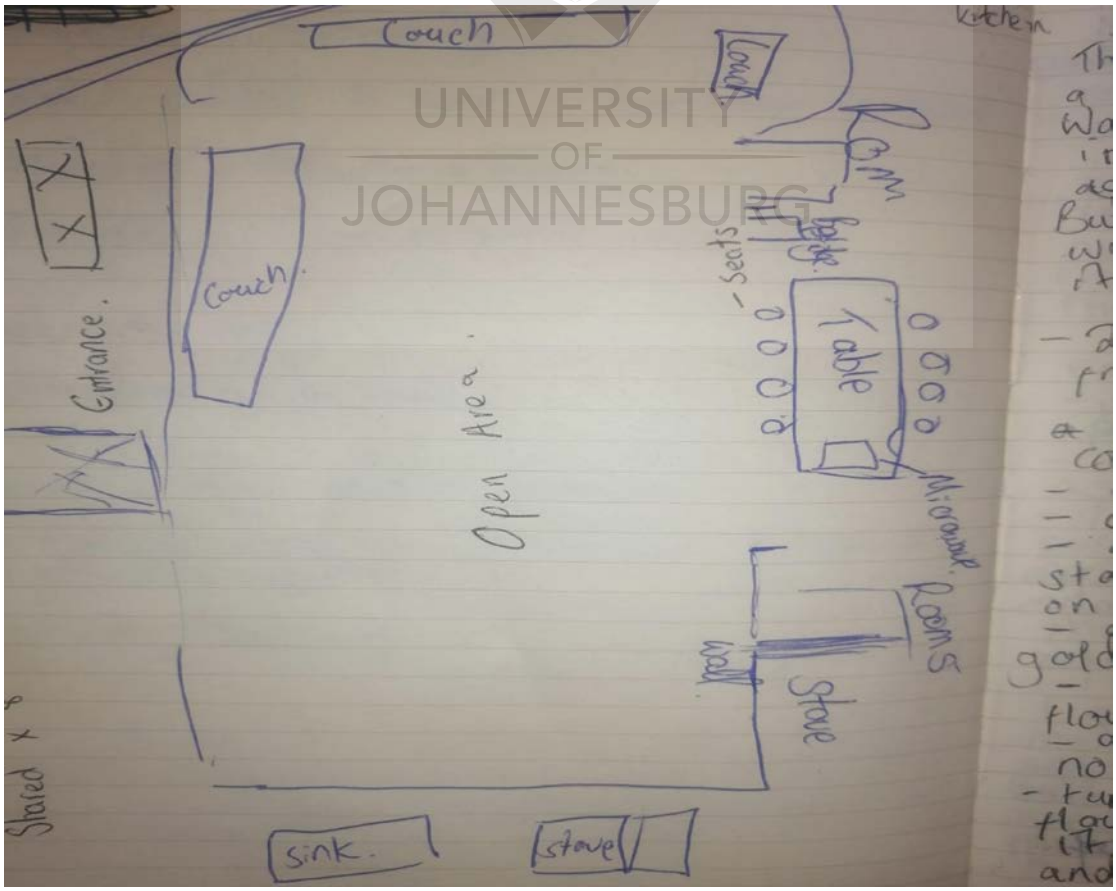
From conducting these interviews and engaging with the participants, I found that there was also an element of trying to make the information more appealing to me, even if it was just narrating recipes. My focus was on my participants but, in some homes, I found that their family members would want to share their opinions and experiences around

food. This allowed me to observe their relationships and the roles that they played in the lives of my participants. These observations and conversations revealed the dynamics of their relationships from as much as the distribution of work, food preferences, who eats what and when. In addition, I noticed that, when conducting the interviews, having other members of the household present had an effect. Due to the “Social Desirability Effect,” some spoke more when someone in the family was present, whereas others withdrew in the presence of others, almost as though they feared being called out for what they said (Bernard, 2011).

Conversations in my research proved to be valuable, as my participants were comfortable and spoke about their nostalgic experiences as they cooked or took me shopping with them. The conversations were natural, and I believe led me to more in-depth and thick descriptive data for this study.

3.5.4 Kitchen Mappings

On the initial visit to my participants’ homes, I created maps of their kitchens for myself. These were in no way sophisticated or made great use of technology, aside from being a sketch for me made in my field notebook. One example of these sketches is shown below.



Kuznar and Werner (2001) state that, even in a simple sketch, there is value. The kitchen mappings helped me in detailing the layout of the kitchens, the exits and the windows that were in the kitchen (Wills *et al.*, 2013) and this later helped me recall and describe the kitchens. Through the mappings, I could gauge the socioeconomic status of the participants based on the appliances that were laid out (Will *et al*., 2013) but this was not relevant to my study and so I did not detail this (refer to Appendix 2 for more sketches).

The mapping of their kitchens helped me to gain a better understanding of the cooking process, as well as giving me an insight into what aspects from home they had brought along into the space to make it more “at home”, although this was not the case with everyone.

3.5.5 Audio Recordings

For this study, I made use of an audio recorder that was inbuilt into one of the two cell phones that I took with me into the field. I made sure to inform participants of my use of a recording device each time, and recorded most conversations, except in moments where I was expressly told not to record, or when a sensitive topic unrelated to the study came up, which went a long way in building and maintaining trust with my participants (Bernard, 2011). The recordings helped in supplementing my field notes and this helped to reduce the pressure of me having to remember everything. This also made for a better flow of conversation as I could focus on engaging with the participant.

I took two phones with me in the field so that I could use one for audio recordings and the other served as a backup; the audio was clear enough for me and I did not need to use an external recorder. As stated by Bernard (2011), the recordings did not replace the note-taking process; instead, it gave me a chance to take note of things that were unseen and would not be picked up by the recorder, such as who was in the room with us, what was happening, the emotions that were expressed, as well as describing our surroundings.

Although participants were initially cautious and guarded when they saw the recorder and realised that I was recording our conversations, they seemed to relax over time, and I believe that this is because, as I mentioned before, I would only record what they allowed me to. The recorder was especially helpful on the grocery store visits, where I could keep the recorder on throughout, since it was not easy for me to take notes on these visits.

3.5.6 Photographs

In the field, I took photographs using one of the two phones that I kept with me. The photos I took were of the kitchens of the participants I was with, the grocery stores, the ingredients that they had, as well the different stages of the cooking process. I made sure to not take any photos of my participants so that they could remain anonymous. The photos helped bring the meals that they shared with me come to life. Some of the photographs that I had were actually sent to me by some participants as part of their food diaries, or of meals from home that they wanted to share with me. The photos that were taken as part of this research can be found in the research section as part of the recipes that I documented from participants (refer to Appendix 4).

3.5.7 Food Diaries

Finally, in addition to the fieldwork, I wanted a way of documenting my participants' food practices for a longer period of time. To this end, I requested that they keep a food diary for two weeks. They had to log all the meals that they had each day, who had prepared the meal, whether it was store-bought or homemade, and the reason behind the meals that they had chosen for the day. At the end of the two weeks, they sent in their logs. According to Pelto (2013), the use of diaries to collect behavioural data, as he puts it, is fairly new in anthropology. For my study, the food diaries worked well as, through allowing them to document the meals that they ate whilst I was away, it allowed me to see what their meals were like in a typical week with life still happening around them. I was aware that my presence may have had an impact on what people ate, cooked and how they cooked whilst I was around, and so I wanted to remove that external influence, but still have access to their everyday lives; thus the food diary enabled this (see example in Appendix 3).

3.6 Process of Data Collection

I carried out the fieldwork for this study for two years, but the bulk of the research took place over eight months. As the study was mainly centred around their homes, I had to work with the time that the participants could accommodate me, which sometimes dragged out the research process. The visits with participants included the initial visit of detailing the research and the signing of consent forms; a second visit at their homes, where kitchen mapping occurred and a meal was prepared; then the final visit, which was

typically a grocery visit. If there were further questions thereafter, this grocery visit was used to further observe and understand the cooking experience in its entirety, by looking at how their selection of ingredients was done. This was typically the order that was followed, but with a few participants, I had to combine some of the visits due to availability and time constraints on their part. A typical visit, excluding the initial visit, was anything between four to six hours, and so a lot of data was collected. I took detailed field notes throughout the research process whilst, at the same time, recording audio where needed, for future reference. Photos were also taken throughout, in an effort to document the conversations and cooking processes. At the end of the third visit, this is when the participants were then asked to keep the food diary for two weeks.

3.7 Data Analysis

At the end of my data collection, I had a copious amount of raw data, and so I needed a method of analysis to help make sense of all of it. To analyse the data that I had gathered for this study, I made use of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a popular tool in qualitative data, as it is accessible, flexible and easy to use (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

The analytic process included:

1. Reading the notes that were made while in the field, listening and transcribing the recordings that were collected from each of the participants, and thereafter comparing the information collected across the different data collection methods, as well as across the different households (Aronson 1995; Wills *et al.*, 2013).
2. Writing notes on the findings that were identified from the cross-examination of the data that was collected.
3. Highlighting themes that stood out from the interviews, as well as the field notes.
4. Providing a summary of the findings that were made on each of the homes.
5. Creating a mind map that included the highlighted themes and sub-themes.
6. Weeding out any irregularities.

In summary, the analytic process firstly included reading through the notes that were made while in the field, listening, transcribing the recordings that were collected from each of the participants, and thereafter comparing the information collected across the different data collection methods as well between participants (Aronson, 1995; Wills *et al*., 2013). From this, themes were identified, highlighted, and then compared across data from each

of the participants. Firstly, I identified all of the topics that had surfaced, and organised them into themes and subthemes (Aronson, 1995). From there, I kept the themes that were true across most of the findings from the participants. Unfortunately, there were some findings that were interesting, but had too many irregularities or were not true in the cases of most participants, and so I had to discard them.

Finally, with my themes identified, I went to the literature to help speak to these themes and thereafter, was able to compile a discussion of my findings, which will follow in the next chapter.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

At the beginning of every field day, I made sure to plan what I intended to achieve on that particular visit. I also reflected on the previous visit with regards to what was missed in the discussions with the participants, and even the areas in which we could improve. I learnt how to communicate efficiently with my participants without making the setting formal and rigid; my aim was for them to be comfortable. This process of reflection helped me to pinpoint potential issues and ensure that these problems were avoided before I went back into the field. The data that I captured was recorded using a digital recording application on one of the two cell phones that I used in the field, along with the images that were taken. With any study, a matter of great importance is that of honesty and transparency within the research process, to ensure that the findings are credible and valid (Golafshani, 2003). Following these same efforts of openness and honesty, I made sure to follow a few steps to ensure the validity and reliability of my findings.

From the beginning, I made sure that I engaged with my research participants, as well as my study, regardless of what was going on at that particular moment. I went over the notes and other forms of information that I collected while in the field and sought out issues and areas of improvement before returning to the field each time. I objectively interpreted the data and strove to let the voices of the participants guide me, instead of having my assumptions overshadow the information. I regularly looked back on the data and the summaries that I had, to ensure that it was clear and was a good representation of the fieldwork that I had carried out.

3.9 Ethics

3.9.1 Informed Consent

For my research, I followed the ethical guidelines as stipulated by the UJ's Code of Academic and Research Ethics, and the guidelines for ethical conduct set by the American Anthropological Association (AAA). With informed consent, there can be issues, especially when working with people who are considered to be vulnerable. Although my participants did not fall under this category, I made sure to respect them, answer their questions and concerns before anything was signed, ensure that I did not pose a risk to their well-being, and made sure that they understood that they could withdraw from the study at any point without having to explain or fear any consequences. When this was clear, I asked them to sign the consent form. I also asked all of the members of the households that I worked with to sign consent forms. With every visit, I would have a conversation with my participants to see how they were doing, what concerns they had with regards to the research and if they were still happy to continue with the study.

When it came to the data that I was recording, I tried by all means to exclude people who were not a part of the family or did not reside at the address, as I did not have their consent to use the information that I obtained from them. As can be expected, there were issues that arose that were not necessarily anticipated, and with these, I had to address them as they came up; such as losing recordings due to a faulty application, participants not wanting to be observed although they had previously agreed to the meeting and so on.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research design and research methods used to gather data in this research project. An ethnography was best suited to unpack the story and experiences of each migrant in the host land. By employing ethnography as a research technique, I was not only able to gather in-depth data, but was also able to share in the experiences of my participants and pick up on the nuances of their daily lives. Through participant observation and the conversations that I had with participants, I was able to get a glimpse into the stories of their lives and their experiences as migrants in the host land. The sections to follow will report on the findings and analysis of the data from this research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Part 1: Pleased to Meet You, Pleased to Eat Your Food

"If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him… The people who give you their food give you their heart" - Cesar Chavez

4.1.1 Introduction

During my time in the field, I collected a large amount of data and several themes came up. This chapter has been divided into three parts, namely; "Pleased to meet you, pleased to eat your food", "Maintaining echoes of home", and finally, "Renegotiating identity through food". The rationale for this structure was to break down the themes which I used to analyse the study into different sections, much like a meal is separated into different courses, so as to best portray the food narratives within my study. The idea behind this was that, just as a meal is separated into different dishes, so too would my findings be best delivered as three main ideas. The purpose of this section, "Pleased to meet you, pleased to eat your food", is to introduce the reader to my study, offer a glimpse of my time in the field by offering a "snapshot" of a day in the field, and more importantly, to introduce my participants. I also look at the idea of "home", and the ways in which my participants have gone about making a home for themselves in an otherwise unfamiliar environment. Thus, food and home share a beautiful relationship. I attempt to look at this idea in the migrant's recreation of home.

Food is a source of energy, a source of life. Food, amongst humans, has gone beyond sustenance; being used as a form of communication, an expression of emotion and even more so, with social events built around the consumption of food. Food has historically been, and continues to be, an important part of socialisation and culture, more so within the home, with traditions and recipes being created and passed on from generation to generation. Certain foods, flavour profiles and ways of consuming this food have become associated with particular cuisines and cultural groups; for example, pasta is synonymous with the Italian cuisine, and the use of chopsticks with Asian food culture. Food, therefore, has become entwined with our identity, with communities being built and brought together by food preferences. Food and its consumption echo our past, our upbringing, the emotions that we feel in a particular moment; it affects, and is affected by, the relationships that we have with other people around us.

Food has become a form of expression, an art form and a reflection of the self, with cuisines being created, tweaked and improved constantly to reflect the ever-evolving self. Food holds the incredible ability to document memories, often unconsciously, only for them to be refreshed by a smell or familiar taste. This entanglement of food, memory and culture, and the ability that food has to transport people to times and locations past, led me to explore the role that food played in the life of the migrant in my study. Migration often leads people to unfamiliar territories with unfamiliar faces, cultures and foods. With this in mind, the focus of my study was to delve deeper and discover if this move, sometimes permanent, affected their food culture. The next two sections will further unpack the participants' experiences in the host land by firstly looking at how they maintain their home identity and also how they balance, navigate and renegotiate the dual identities that they now have.

4.1.2 Ten Dishes

Over the course of several months, I got to encounter, eat and experience the foods of different people from different backgrounds. I found myself being transported into a new world with each kitchen that I entered. From experiencing the spicy world of Cameroonian food, the colourful Spanish cuisine and hearty Dutch food, I found myself developing new tastes and picking up new techniques in the kitchen, but ultimately, being afforded an opportunity to sit at the table of brilliant home cooks who had beautiful stories to share. Although some participants were from the same country, no kitchen was alike, and with each new home, I was allowed to explore the beautiful and unique narrative of each migrant which had ultimately led to that moment where I was sitting in their kitchen. Much like the various dishes that we favour, that are a symphony of complex flavours, ingredients and cooking times, my participants' lives are a balance of complex life experiences and tastes, and this has ultimately led to their current food narratives. Allow me to briefly introduce you to *ten dishes*, my ten participants:

<u>Diego</u>

Diego is a middle-aged man Spanish man who lives in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. After completing his studies back home in Spain, he was offered employment in Johannesburg and moved to South Africa. Since having moved here 13 years ago, he visits home an average of two times a year and plans on eventually moving back. To him, South Africa is not home, but rather, a country where he is employed. He

often misses home, as his brother, whom he first lived with here, has now moved back home; he only has his uncle and friends from Spain here with him. He takes a lot of pride in Spanish food, often sourcing ingredients that come straight from Spain, where possible.

Diego lives in a two bedroomed apartment with his housemate, but since they eat and shop separately, he is entirely responsible for what he eats, often choosing to recreate the flavours that he enjoys and are reminiscent of home.

Estelle

Estelle is a young woman in her 20s. She moved to Johannesburg alone from Cameroon to further her studies in 2015. She lives alone at a university in Johannesburg in the on-campus accommodation that is offered by the university. She has not managed to visit home from the time that she moved to South Africa, as it is very expensive, but she often speaks to her family and friends to stay informed about what is going on back home. She dreams of one day moving back home, but realises that she needs to study abroad to be able to provide a better future for her family. She enjoys making meals that she learnt to make when she was young and, although she will have the occasional pizza, she generally prefers to make food from back home and often receives her ingredients from home, or buys what she can in the city.

Rachel

Rachel is a young academic in her 30s. She lives in Johannesburg with her partner. She moved to Cape Town from the Netherlands to further her studies, and later moved to Johannesburg for a career opportunity. She visits home often and plans trips in time with business trips to save costs. She loves South Africa and does not necessarily long for her home country, but her friends and family back home. Rachel identifies as a vegetarian, but her partner Kevin is not, and so they often take turns with their cooking and consequently, their cooking has many influences. Although Kevin was not a direct participant in this study, he did offer many insights during the research.

Irene

Irene is a young engineer in her 20s. She was born and raised in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and later moved to South Africa after having completed her high school education to pursue a university degree. She moved here with her sister, and their parents are still back home in the DRC. Although she has not been back home since the move,

their parents visit often. She often misses her family and friends back home and dreams of one day going back home to get married. Irene lives with her sister in Johannesburg and, although they share the duties in the home, her sister cooks more often, as she is always at home. Her meals typically consist of western dishes, but when the chance arises, or she gets ingredients from home, then she will prepare Congolese dishes.

Tanya

Tanya is a young student in her 20s. She is currently pursuing her doctorate at a university in Johannesburg. She moved to South Africa from Zimbabwe in 2012 to pursue her tertiary education. Of Tanzanian and Zimbabwean descent, the two cultures are often visible in the food she eats. She lives with her mother and sister in Johannesburg, and so does not often long for home as it is expensive to live there. She only travels back home when there is something important that needs to be done, such as visa renewals. She is largely responsible for the meals that her family eats, and this often affects what she eats, as her mother prefers traditional Zimbabwean food that Tanya does not necessarily enjoy.

Sunny

Sunny is a Dutch student who was visiting Johannesburg for a few months as part of an exchange programme. She was excited to come to South Africa as this was her first trip out of Europe and she had not been this far away from home before. She lives in the Netherlands with her partner and often sees her family weekly, but here in South Africa, the only contact she had to home was the occasional video call. In Johannesburg, she lives in on-campus accommodation that was provided as part of the exchange programme to her and her fellow international students. She does some of the cooking here herself, but because of how well she gets along with the other students that live in the same house, they often cook communally.

David

David is a postgraduate student living in Johannesburg. He moved here from Kenya four years ago to further his studies. He does not always get the chance to go home as he cannot always afford it, but sometimes he gets lucky and goes on trips close to home, then he gets to see his family. He does not have any immediate family in South Africa, but what he lacks in family, he has in friends, which makes the distance much easier for him to bear. He lives alone in Johannesburg and so is solely responsible for what he eats, often opting for the convenient takeaways that he can eat in the breaks between his

schoolwork. He hopes to one day leave the African continent for better opportunities so that he can uplift his family back home.

Veronica

Veronica is a 30-year-old professional living in Johannesburg with her husband and two young children. She moved to South Africa eight years ago from Cameroon to complete her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Veronica does not get the chance to visit home often as the cost of travelling is too high, but she misses her mother terribly. She often calls home as a way of staying connected with her family. Veronica is strict about being the only one to prepare the meals in her home, and makes time to ensure that every night she makes meals for her family, typically traditional Cameroonian dishes that her husband enjoys.

Alex

Alex is an academic living in Johannesburg. He moved to Johannesburg from Zimbabwe after high school to further his studies. He visits home at least once a year as his immediate family still stays back home. He lives alone, and because of his sometimes lengthy office hours, he tends to order a lot of food online, as he finds it more convenient. He loves his home country, but unfortunately, sees no room for growth and so the prospects of moving back home are not realistic for him.

Paida

Paida is a young woman living and working in Johannesburg. She moved to South Africa eight years ago from Zimbabwe to pursue her law degree. She visits home often as her parents are still there and still makes an effort to try and help them financially, where possible. Although she has started a company of her own here and is pursuing her doctorate, she still hopes to one day move back to Zimbabwe. She lives alone and makes an effort to cook as many of her meals as possible as she enjoys cooking.

4.1.3 Creating Home

The concept or idea of home has proven to be difficult to narrow down. In different fields and different contexts, home means different things. More often than not, people can agree on things that are associated with home before they can agree on a common definition for home. Home is often associated with a house or some sort of dwelling place and some sort of interaction with others, whether they are family or not. Home is often

associated with some sort of feeling, whether positive or negative. There is an assumption that home offers comfort and is a private space away from the world where one can relax and is offered some sort of safety. This then leads me to conclude that home is subjective, and its meaning and the emotions attached to it differ from person to person. For this study, home has a dual meaning and refers primarily to one's country of origin, as well as the places that they live in here, in their host country.

Home, or even just the thought of home, in many cases, produces a feeling of comfort, and often, a detachment from home will result in a feeling of "home-sickness", a longing for home. It is in the home where we first learn different skills, from interpersonal skills to survival skills. It is in the home that we first build relationships, experience different joys and more importantly, where we have our first interaction and socialisation around food. Home is where we first create memories. The feeling of comfort that is experienced when one is at "home" is a feeling that is sought out by many. Consequently, when one has to leave home, they *re*create home.

With this understanding in mind, we can see that the reasons for someone leaving their home may be different, leading to them having varied perceptions of home and, in turn, varied perceptions and feelings around the food of their homeland. This too echoes what I found with the migrants who participated in my study.

4.1.4 A Snapshot from The Field

In this section, I aim to share a snapshot from my fieldwork to share the depth of the experience during my conversations and participant observation for this research. Even though I try to capture the depth of the experiences in my findings and analysis, I wanted to include a description to bring to light the value of ethnographic research.

On a chilly September morning, I found myself seated in the front seat of a car that I had arranged to transport me on the day, somewhat sleepy, but anxiously waiting to get my field research done. I was on my way to Veronica's house, on the east of Johannesburg. I was unsure of what to expect, as the meeting had been hastily arranged after being cancelled several times, and all I had received was a quick text message with an address, telling me that they would start cooking at 6 am the following morning, and to be there early. After having insisted, over the previous months, that I was not intimidated by early mornings and that I did not want to miss any of the cooking and preparation processes, I was somewhat embarrassed as I arrived at the gate just before 7 am. A beautiful house

with manicured lawns stood before me; there was already movement in the yard, with two young children waving at the car, a dog barking and Veronica walking towards us ready to open the gate.

While I was concerned about my tardiness, Veronica was cheerful and abuzz with energy. She greeted us and ushered us into her house, insisting that my driver should come in and have some breakfast, instead of sitting in the car as we had planned. I was impressed by how welcoming she was, and quickly followed her into a large kitchen that was already full of activity, as my driver was whisked away to the lounge. Every corner was occupied by ingredients that were to be used for the feast that they were seemingly preparing. I had not realised that we were preparing enough food for an army. I did not have a chance to feel awkward or gather my thoughts. Instead, I was encouraged to clear some space for myself on a table that was overflowing with vegetables. Veronica quickly introduced me to her niece, Mary, who was visiting for the weekend, and Alice, her nanny, who was in the kitchen helping her. I immediately felt like I fit in, as we were all around the same age, and I was tasked with helping to cut some green apples that would be later used to make the salad that would accompany the meal. At this point, Veronica excused herself as she needed to run to the store to go and buy tomatoes, as she had forgotten to buy them the previous day.

Before she left, she opened the oven to check on the fish that had been roasting before I arrived. Immediately, I was hit by the warm wafting smell of cooked fish and roasted garlic which made my mouth water, and, on cue, my stomach let out a faint rumble, reminding me I had not had breakfast. Unaware of the reaction that her cooking and the delicious smells emanating from her oven was causing to my now greedy mind, Veronica announced that the first round of fish was now cooked. She went on to explain how the marinade had been made by blending different peppers with garlic and other herbs, and how this was then rubbed down onto the fish before it was roasted in the oven, occasionally adding more of the paste to avoid the drying out of the fish. She mentioned that this was a recipe that she had adopted from her mother whilst she was growing up as a young girl. She told me of how she travelled to the MTN taxi rank in the Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD) specifically each time to purchase the fish, as there was a lady who sold the Mackerel that they ate back home in Cameroon. As she showed me the fresh version of the fish, I could not help but remark at how different it looked from the hake fillets that I was accustomed to, and where other fish looked flaky once cooked, this

fish looked more fleshy, like a cross between chicken breasts and fish. She mentioned that, although other places sold fish, it was not always the correct fish, or it was not affordable. The MTN taxi rank was quite far from where she lived, but she preferred to source ingredients from home at that specific shop, as she could trust the price and quality of the food that she was getting there.

After Veronica left, I chopped away at the apples, working in companionable silence with Alice, with the silence being occasionally broken by the happy chatter of the children that I had seen earlier coming off from further in the house. Now that Veronica was away, I had a chance to look around at the impressive kitchen that I was in, and from what I could see of the dining room, this house was big and well furnished. Every surface within this vast kitchen was covered with food and ingredients that were at different stages of preparation. One corner had fruits and vegetables stacked, whilst on the right, there were dishes filled with marinated fish waiting to go into the oven. I wondered to myself what all this food was for, and Veronica would later explain that they were making food for a church lunch for about a hundred people, and mothers within their congregation took turns to provide a meal for everyone each Sunday. She laughingly mentioned that this was her first time cooking for everyone, as she had joined the church when she was a teenager back home in Cameroon, and although she was now a mother herself, had not cooked as she still saw herself as a teenager within the church.

Whilst Veronica was away, the kitchen took on a calmer energy. I took notes and helped in starting to clear up the mountain of pots and dishes that lined the counter space near the sink. Alice had a quiet calm about her as she continued to tidy the kitchen; she began sweeping, although we were far from finishing with the chopping process, better yet the cooking. I noticed that, although there was still a lot to do, she would only do small tasks such as cleaning up or preparing ingredients without actually cooking anything, which I found odd, but then figured that it may be because, just like me, she did not know the recipes.

Eventually, Veronica came back, and by this time, it was getting warmer and sunnier outside. We started preparing a sauce in which she added onions and tomatoes which she cooked down with Maggi cubes. I remembered these cubes from when I was younger, growing up in Zimbabwe, and when I mentioned this, she seemed pleased. She said that those Maggi cubes were a staple of Cameroonian cooking, and substituting them was not an option for her as this was important in creating the taste that was Cameroonian. Where

I had been familiar with these cubes, I had never seen the importance of them and it struck me how the same ingredient can mean different things for different people. Veronica said that she bought these cubes each month from Nigerian or Cameroonian shops, either in Braamfontein or in Yeoville, as local shops did not have these cubes.

Whilst we cut down a pot of boiled meat that was to be used for another dish, Veronica and I got to talking about cooking and her influences, not only in her cooking style, but in some of the flavours that she recreated in her kitchen. Veronica mentioned that when growing up, she had not been a girl who liked to be in the kitchen often, but when she went to university, and ultimately South Africa, she had found herself in a position where she had to cook for herself, and now also for her family. Although she had not been formally trained, she noticed that she had retained what she saw her mother doing whilst growing up, and this is where she drew her recipes and cooking practices from, such as the fish marinade mentioned earlier. She mentioned that she had adopted other cooking techniques from cooking together with friends and seeing how they had learnt to cook. She highlighted that she still cooked Cameroonian food because, to her, it was the best food and she liked the taste of it in comparison to other cuisines. Veronica stated that in their home, they ate and enjoyed South African food often, with pasta dishes being her favourite. Below is a quote where Veronica tries to explain the withdrawal or ill-feeling that she experiences when she has not had Cameroonian food for a week.

> *"…I mean you eat South African dishes but sometimes if you go for a week without eating your dish, or even four days, like you feel something is wrong, something is missing"* – (Veronica, participant, 2018).

Our conversation was punctuated by the steady chop-chop-chop of us chopping more vegetables as she told me more about her home. She mentioned that food was important in bridging the gap between home and South Africa, and before they travelled abroad, the custom back home was for people to ask if they would be able to find food in this new country that they were moving to. She said that the perception that people back home had of people abroad was that they were suffering, as they saw them to be "missing out" on the abundance of food in Cameroon, and even after being told that there is food from home readily available, people were still reluctant to visit. To supplement some of the things from back home, Veronica mentioned that they often used maize meal, which is a South African product, but very similar to their fufu corn; although their cooking methods are different. She went on to show me a pack of a local brand of maize meal that I was

familiar with, although none was being made for this meal, as there were already two gigantic pots filled with cooked rice. At this point, Veronica went to check on the second batch of fish which was in the oven and mentioned that the heat was too much and needed to be reduced. Although there were several activities taking place she seemed to be attuned to each of the individual dishes and their progress.

I attempted to talk to Alice whilst we worked, whom up until this point, I had only spoken to in brief spurts, such as requesting a knife or asking if there was anything else that I could help with. I had learnt that she was from Zimbabwe just like me and I had been hoping to connect with her more. I remarked to her how she must have learnt so many recipes whilst living and working for Veronica, as I had already learnt so much just from spending a few hours here. She politely laughed and said no, and I chose not to probe. She told me how she had been in South Africa for only a year, and I soon realised that, although she answered what I had asked, it felt more like she was just being polite than her trying to take part in a conversation with me. Communication between us was very stilted, and almost uncomfortable, because we had to communicate using English; although we were both from Zimbabwe, neither of us spoke the other's language. I decided to let her be, and instead, Mary and I started speaking about our studies, as she was also a university student at Monash. She told me that church would start at 10:00 am but they planned to be out of the house by 09:00 am, and at this point, a lot still needed to be prepared, as uncooked ingredients still occupied various areas of the kitchen. We all fell into a companionable silence, as we became engrossed in the tasks that we were doing, realising that we only had about another hour before the family had to leave for church.

Veronica began helping us put ingredients together, all the while roasting more fish; clearly the maestro behind this production. She was sure to explain each part of the food process to me so that I would not miss it, even offering to help me take photos at different stages so that I had as much data as possible, which was very helpful. I found myself reflecting at different stages about how accommodating the family had been, which was marginally different from some of my field experiences leading up to this quite endearing moment. At this point, we started preparing fried rice. Veronica said that, for this, we would fry tomatoes with all of the spices and vegetables, but only combine the ingredients for the fried rice at church because they would only eat at 13:30, and so she had to keep everything separate to avoid the food spoiling before lunchtime, with cooked rice and

sauces being very sensitive foods that could spoil easily in the heat. Veronica was aware that this food was going to go to a lot of people, and so she was aware of how people could easily get sick if any part of the food was not handled well. Thus, she was very cautious about the hygiene around the food.

Veronica mentioned that she had picked up a way to make her vegetables tastier, which was to add Aromat to them. This was something that she had adapted to her cooking after being introduced to the seasoning here in South Africa. She still kept the heart of her cooking, which she had mentioned earlier: the Maggi cubes. Although back home they had more variety, any Maggi cube could be used along with the chilli. I was shocked as she passed more than a handful of chillies to her niece to blend for the sauce. She saw my reaction and said that she had actually reduced the amount of chilli to accommodate everyone's tastes at church. Her church was a multicultural church, with people from all over the world, such as Korea, Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Nigeria and many other places, and so she was aware that not everyone was accustomed to the same flavour profiles. Therefore, she had toned down some of the flavours to reach a happy medium. I was impressed by how considerate she was; as much as she wanted them to experience her culinary culture, she did not want it to be overwhelming for those trying it for the first time. As we continued to cook, she spoke to me about some of the activities that her church embarked on. As it was a missionary church, there were people, mainly students, from all over the world who would go to other countries to assist where there were needed for periods of between six months to a year. I could feel the pride and love that she had for her church and the work that they did.

Initially, Veronica had wanted to make pap[1] and spinach because her church ate a lot of rice, but she decided to stick to rice as she was concerned that not everyone would eat pap, and realised that there was probably a reason why everyone chose to cook rice each time. Rice, according to Veronica was more for children in the Cameroonian culture, while adults ate more of the pap and plantain. She showed me the plantain that she had made the previous day, and this is what they would typically eat with the fish that she was roasting. Plantain looks like a larger form of bananas and she bought hers at the Fruit and Veg store, although she could also find it in Cameroonian and Nigerian shops. I commented to her on how everyone was going to enjoy the food that she was making and how I would have loved to see them all experience her food, not to mention how I

[1] Pap – popular starch across African countries made from maize meal, it has different names depending on the region

was inwardly longing to taste the food that had been tormenting me all morning. Veronica admitted that she had meant to invite me to church with her, but had been unsure, since it was such short notice, and although I did not say it, I had not prepared to sit in a church all day, great food or not. I felt like I would have had to mentally prepare myself, as it was not something I was accustomed to, nor was I dressed for it. We agreed that I would join her some other time.

A tinkling timer went off for the first time from the oven, reminding us of the fish that was still roasting. This prompted me to ask how long it took each batch of fish to cook because previously, they had just taken out batches without me paying attention to whether it was timed or not. Veronica stated that she cooked mainly by sight and taste, and so she could often look at the food that she was cooking and know when it was ready. She stated that she could also tell if the dish was ready from its smell and taste. She mentioned that this is how she cooked back at home, and even with measurements, they generally went by taste, and through that, they would know if a dish was balanced; unless if it was baking, where people need to be precise, and because she did not enjoy baking, she never had to measure her ingredients.

Eventually, we moved on to speaking about when she moved to South Africa, as well as the political climate back home in Cameroon. Having been in South Africa for 7 years without visiting home since 2015, she had been hopeful that she would finally be able to go and see her mother; but because of the civil unrest that was taking place at the time, she had to postpone her visit. Her pain and was frustration were palpable, as she spoke of the fight between the English and French-speaking Cameroonians. She spoke of the marginalisation that English speaking Cameroonians faced, regardless of the contribution that they made to their economy. This was all coupled with a president who had been in power for decades. This is a story that many, like myself, could relate to; with leaders refusing to relinquish power and how the political tensions in a country could tear families apart. Whereas some of us could visit our home countries often, I could only imagine how much she had looked forward to going home, even if it were only for a few weeks, and her disappointment at having to delay that again.

We spoke a while longer about her upbringing and how she had been the last of seven children, as well as being the only girl. She said that this had made her the favourite child, but had also this ensured that her brothers were trained in all household chores, without any chores being exclusively for the women in the family, as is often the case in many

African homes. Although I had initially assumed that she was French-speaking, it turned out that she was an English speaking Cameroonian who also knew French. Growing up, she had not been taught her home language as her parents had not seen a need for her to learn the language, as it was not a language that she would be taught at school and so would be of no use. On the other hand, her husband, who is Cameroonian as well, spoke his home language, Pale*. Her envy was evident as she spoke of how, unlike her, his parents had not been brainwashed and had seen the importance of language. At least she spoke Pidgin English, and this helped her feel that this was her language that she could use that was not too foreign. I asked how language played a role in her raising her children, especially since they were born and living in South Africa. At the time, she had only taught her children English and had plans to teach them French. Her husband, on the other hand, had started slowly introducing the children to his home language, with their daughter, who was the oldest of the two children at three years old, already using the greetings. She said that she wanted her children to be familiar with their culture and their food as they grew up, as that was who they were; she made an emphasis on the necessity of her daughter knowing how to cook Cameroonian food.*

> *"...definitely, she will cook like a Cameroonian. Anything else, but cooking she will cook that way, she will know everything that I know!"* – (Veronica, participant, 2018).

Our conversation, at this point, was interrupted by the desperate sounds of coughing; they were coming from Mary, who had been frying up the chillies and seemingly, the chillies were fighting back. Veronica went over to soothe her and offered her some water. Soon, even I had to step out to get some fresh air, as the peppery burn of chilli scented air spread through the kitchen and settled in the back of my throat, choking me. The baby also became restless at this point and Veronica had to attend to him. We continued on with the cooking, packing away food that was already ready. I also got to meet her husband, who was very quiet, but also very polite. In between cooking, different members of the family went off to get ready; I sat outside as there was not much to do besides waiting for the food to cook. What had been a busy morning was now winding down as the cooking came to an end. There was still a nervous energy as people got ready for church. Veronica gave me a tour of her house and yard, again making me feel very welcome and making me wish we had more time.

She took me back into the house and offered me a beautiful plate that was filled with the food that we had been cooking. I felt out of place being the only one to eat whilst everyone

was still getting ready, and so she packed me a meal. This heightened my excitement to get home so I could dig into the meal that I had been anticipating since that first smell of roasted fish.

With more dishes reaching completion, and us packing the car that was going to their church, the morning came to an abrupt end. Soon, it was time to make reluctant goodbyes, with promises of me visiting soon. A morning that had been a struggle to get up for, for me, was now a morning that I was reluctant for it to end. Their hospitality and generosity had made me feel like I was one of them, but with a hoot of the car horn, it was over, as they went off to church and I was whisked back home.

4.1.5 Conclusion: Beyond Nutrition

From the time spent in the field with my participants, along with the entries that they made in their food diaries, it is safe to say that a lot of time was spent either thinking about food, preparing it, making plans around food or eating the food. We eat to sustain ourselves, but in the bigger picture, nutrition is only a small part of why we eat, as well as our interaction with food. Food has become a way of life, a form of expression and so much thought goes into what is made, how it is presented, where it is bought and where it was sourced. Food carries emotion and is an emotional experience that often holds echoes of our childhood, our personal histories and our identity (Fischer, 2017: 34). I often noticed that people were not looking over labels to see the nutritional contents. It was more about taste, allergies, preferences and even what they craved at that moment, and this was just for everyday food. When guests were coming around, there was even more thought and performance put into it. Shopping was done at more expensive stores, the presentation of the food was more elaborate and even how the meals were shared changed, as tables would be set, fancy plates brought out, and sometimes, even the dressing changed. Even the kitchen, a space that is often forgotten, becomes a place where culture is passed on, conversations are had, relationships are built and, in my case, new friends are made. This space that is often overlooked is transformed by the food that enters and leaves it, much like the people who also enter and leave it.

Food and eating are very much forms of socialisation and culture. As children, we are first introduced, and get accustomed, to flavours and tastes within the household, and we carry these impressions into our adulthood, either by seeking out these familiar tastes, or by even avoiding them. As all of my participants were migrants, it was interesting to note

how they all spoke of “food from home”, and had noted how they sought out some of these flavours in these new environments and countries that they found themselves in. In this case, food is a time machine, transporting the migrants that I spoke with back home just by a smell or taste; allowing them to reconnect with home through their palates. Memories are built and relived through food, and in moments where one is feeling adrift, food provides comfort by allowing one to remember home. Here, the intimacy of food and its consumption is revealed, as it goes beyond just eating, and instead, is a way of accessing family that is otherwise unreachable, through the exploration of these tastes.

Food, during my fieldwork, served as a way of communicating; there were elaborate meals for special occasions and so, by simply walking into the room, you knew that this was not an ordinary meal. Food is emotion, and so too are the meals different, based on temperament; elaborate meals are made when overjoyed, and sometimes, cooking does not even take place if a participant is unhappy. Food is symbolic, and so too are the rituals that go with the food, its preparation and also its consumption. Some rituals are universal, many are family-specific and new traditions are constantly being formed.

Food is an instruction, so participants would often refer back to a recipe that was passed down in the family, and for those that were experimental, they referred to cookbooks or hastily googled recipes. Food is a community in the way that it is shared, the way that it brings people together and the way that ideas are continually shared and improved. Food is art; it was not just thrown on a plate and there was a common language of vegetables, meat and starches all being put together to create a meal. Food allowed people to express their heritage in the way that they interacted with ingredients to express their culture, individuality and even ideologies.

Ultimately, from observing my participants and interacting with them, I came to realise that food goes beyond nutrition. Food is an extension and an expression of the self, and it plays an important role in the creation of home and familiarity in an otherwise unfamiliar, if not hostile, environment. In the next chapter, “Maintaining Echoes of Home”, I delve deeper into these stories, relationships and experiences around food, specifically with a focus on how they maintain their identities and customs from back home within the host land.

4.2 Part 2: Maintaining Echoes of Home

"*Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are" - Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin*

4.2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I delve deeper into looking at how the migrants participating in this study have managed to recreate and maintain their ideas and cultural norms from home, in this new, and often unfamiliar, environment that they find themselves living in. Having come from a place where they belonged, they now find themselves not quite fitting in.

The participants in this study maintain their identity in many different ways, and the rest of this chapter is going to speak to the strategies that my participants adopted to maintain this identity. The methods that they use as strategies of maintenance include; relying on their memory, shopping for "real ingredients", maintenance of traditions and rituals around food, as well as seeking out specific flavours and tastes from home. The analytical tool that I will be using to unpack this chapter is Memory. I will draw on memory as a frame through which to unpack how my participants maintain their identity in the host land. Memory is key, as it connects them to their experiences with food from childhood, through to adulthood.

4.2.2 Maintenance of Home Identity

As part of settling into their host land, migrants often hold on to as much of their past and homelands as they can. Due to the unfamiliarity of the new country, culture and traditions, participants sought out any reminders from home. Maintaining their identity before moving to South Africa became extremely important, almost out of fear that this new country would not only take away what they once knew, but turn them into someone they could not recognise. One participant, Alex, remembered how he reassured his friends, before he moved to South Africa, about how he was not going to change and that he was only going to study here, then go back home. Not only was it reassurance for his friends, but also himself. This is not to say that there was anything particularly horrendous about South Africa – truthfully, this could have been this case with any country – but it was more a fear of becoming someone who could not relate to his peers. This was evident with most of my participants, in varying degrees. From those who listened to music that they had once disregarded, to those who started eating food that they only recognised from

their past. By consuming the culture from home, they were allowed to replenish and hold on to that part of them that they were now separated from.

We see this phenomenon expressed in literature too, as I have referenced in my Chapter 2, with the work of the likes of Mankekar (2002) and Plaza (2014), where migrants consume as much as they can of back home in order to stay connected and replenish their identity through the consumption of material that they remember or are familiar with. I will look into some of these ways of maintenance in detail in the sections that follow.

4.2.3 Memory

As memory is the overarching frame for this section, I will start by exploring it as a concept, along with participants' interactions with their memories as a strategy of maintenance. Memory is a complex faculty, with each of us having a mental pocketbook of unique moments from our past that we have access to, some unknowingly, until triggered by the familiarity within the moment. We each have different capacities for memory, but the beauty lies in the access that we have to relive the past, if only for a moment. The memories of the migrant have proven to be a treasure trove in the process of settling into a new environment, especially so when it comes to this idea of maintaining home and recreating aspects of culture. It is often through memory that home is recreated, often echoing their relationship with, and feelings of, home. Berliner (2005: 201), when speaking of memory, states that "memory is not these series of recalled mental images, but a synonym for cultural storage of the past, it is the reproduction of the past in the present, this accumulated past which acts in us and makes us act".

Participants noted how, at different moments, their memories had helped in moments of homesickness and loneliness, where all they wanted was to be home with familiar faces. Memories also helped in moments of happiness, where they wanted to share with loved ones but were unable to. Tanya noted that memories were important because, although they were not always pleasant, through reliving these memories, home did not seem like a far off land. Remembering where they came from also helped them to stay focused on why they were here; most were here to provide a better living for themselves and their families.

> *"I know the trouble that faces me back home, I will always work. Once I have everything in order, I will go back. But there are no jobs there, so what can I do?"* – (Paida, participant, 2018).

What was interesting to note was that, even with this longing for home, participants did not romanticise the idea of home. This was evident with participants that had been forced to move, whether for economic reasons, or the fact that they were coming from countries with civil unrest. Home was still a place that many longed to return to because, even with economic opportunities here in South Africa, not many of them felt welcome or entirely at home, especially with the participants who were from neighbouring African countries. To stay hopeful, they chose to remember a time when conditions were not bad in their country, and it is this image that they held onto and gave them hope that they would one day return home. By keeping these memories alive, and also relying on their memories to keep traditions alive, home was an accessible place, a place they could return to. One participant even went on to say that even if there was still unrest at home, but they were guaranteed a good job, either in the government or within a well-established non-governmental organisation, they would leave in a heartbeat; this being although they have settled in and even have property here. This demonstrates how one's relationship with home can be a complicated one, as mentioned by Andits (2015). Our relationships with home do not always encourage feelings of belongingness and positivity, but instead, home elicits many different emotions and reactions.

Food was used as a tool of remembrance. By recreating dishes and tastes from home, memories that offered comfort to those who were longing for home would often be elicited and, in some cases, unconsciously eating a meal or coming across a flavour from home would trigger a long-forgotten memory that was associated with that meal or flavour. Counihan (1998), as referred to in Chapter 2, unpacks this. Food and memory are connected through the daily rhythms of life which help make food a conduit for remembering. Memories could also be triggered through shopping and the consumption of home brands, as people would look out for familiar brands when shopping, and this went beyond food, as participants noted using soap, tea and food brands that they had not been fans of but remembered seeing back home. Memories are therefore continuously coming together with the present, evoked by smell, taste, or a familiar image; these memories remain, but are edited and tweaked to fit the present (Sutton, 2011).

Memory facilitates the reproduction of culture. Through memory, food, recipes and even emotion can be recreated. Home becomes accessible through nostalgia, and memories can sometimes be used as a coping mechanism for the stressful situations that they find themselves in when settling into a foreign place. Memory is used as as a tool for cultural

recreation, passing on through the generational lines of these memories. Some of these memories are not their own, but are those of their parents and are held so dear. Memory is often used as a pocketbook. Through the use of food, memories and flavours are passed on, but room is also left for the tweaking of these flavours and recipes, and memories almost serve as a base for what one likes and does not like and, from there, a food identity can be formed. This is much like how Veronica stated that her daughter would know everything that she does about Cameroonian food and, from there, she could choose her own path, but after having first known her culture. Losing traditional culinary practices for migrants can be equated to the abandonment of culture (Gabaccia, 1998: 58), which is probably the reason behind Veronica's insistence. Memory and tradition are sometimes expected to be a social marker for how the migrant should live in this new environment. This can sometimes cause conflict within the self when the host land does not allow for this expression.

4.2.4 "Real Ingredients and Real Food"

All of my participants admittedly sourced flavours and tastes from home and had several dishes that they would make that originated from their country of birth. Surprisingly, many of them spoke of "real food", which I initially took to mean home-cooked food, as even this was a term that I often used to distinguish between fast food and food that had been prepared from home. However, this was not the case. When referring to real food, participants were referring to food that they had grown up with, and food that was familiar to them. This familiarity with the flavours, smells and even the ingredients of these various dishes made this food "real" to them because this food was part of a reality that had helped in shaping their identities and now went on to maintaining those identities, their food identities. Bailey (2016) states that a sense of belonging is derived from the food from home, as well as the memories evoked by the consumption of these foods (Bailey, 2016).

> "*I like food, and I like reeeal food like not… I don't know what I can say, for instance, I see people saying I cook meat, no no… it is not real because I didn't make it and I don't know what is in there"* – (Estelle, participant, 2018).

> *"Real food you know is the food that we know, the food that we grew up with in Cameroon…"* – (Veronica, participant, 2018).

When one first hears of this distinction between real versus non-real food, it is easy to be taken aback as this seemingly is blatant "othering." However, when one looks at the context in which these words are being said, then one begins to understand the reasons behind this distinction. Most of them found themselves, in their early to mid-twenties, moving to an entirely new country with its norms, languages, food, music, traditions; the list is endless. In many cases, they all moved to South Africa on their own, with only a family friend or an odd relative on whom they could rely. This would be daunting for anyone. The discussion around real food is not actually about fast food or the nutritional value of the food; it is rather about the association of the food to their upbringing and homeland. Through memory, participants connect to this "real" familiar food to maintain their identity. To make sense of this new environment, they would then bring in elements of their world that they are familiar with but, in doing that, they would also be some rejection of the new norms.

Below a participant talks about the first few months of living in South Africa.

> "*I was excited to come to South Africa, I had never left Zim so you know, but yeah the first few months were lonely. But it gets better once you make friends"* – (Alex, participant, 2018).

As a way of coping upon moving here, some of them began consuming a lot of the culture from back home, upholding traditions that were not always understood, listening to music from back home, following the news on the television, and with that too, eating food that they were familiar with.

In their respective host land, they sought out shops that stock the food that they are familiar with, and for those who had just moved in, they relied on their networks in South Africa to inform them about the shops to go to, or they happened to come across them accidentally. For some, the sourcing of ingredients from home was more elaborate, with participants managing to smuggle anything from dried fish, to fruits and vegetables from back home onto aeroplanes and buses. In smuggling this produce, people were not always lucky, but also built connections and networks to avoid detection. Estelle, upon our initial home visit, showed me white pepper that she had brought from Cameroon when she moved to South Africa in 2015. It was unlike any pepper I had seen, with a tough outer shell and the size of a plum pip. Despite its hardy shell, it was a miracle that it had managed to survive almost four years.

This consumption of home is not meant to portray the host country in a negative light, but is meant to offer comfort in an otherwise unfamiliar place, with its alien tastes and flavours. The participants, in this case, were portraying food neophobia (fear of unfamiliar tastes) which is common in migrants, according to Brown and Paszkiewicz (2016). By recreating familiar tastes, if only for a moment, they are then able to elicit memories of home that help bridge the distance between them and the familiar, them and their loved ones. In this sense, what is familiar satisfies a need within them to validate their existence, both back home and in this new place. What satisfies is the "real" because it satisfies that feeling of being "real". This food, again, goes beyond sustenance and works as a tool which reinforces the self in this environment. As stated by Sutton (2011), we judge all things that we experience based on our memories of similar past experiences, even food.

4.2.5 Shopping in Jozi

To make "real food", "real ingredients" were needed. During my fieldwork, I had the chance to visit stores that specialise in food from Zimbabwe and Nigeria. These stores were nestled amongst other general stores and salons, all offering different goods and services, but all seemingly owned by foreign nationals. All around the storefronts, people spoke in local languages, distant tongues or English, with music from different regions competing to be heard. In the shops that I entered, one in Randburg and another in the Johannesburg city centre, I was amazed how, upon entering, the chatter of outside was quietened and I was immediately transported into a world where it was clear that this was either a Nigerian or Zimbabwean shop. Whereas outside was a mix of cultures, here, my senses were flooded with music from these regions, people greeted each other in *Shona*, *Pidgin* and many other languages I could not understand.

Shop owners in these two shops understood and capitalised on this need to maintain the familiar. It was evident through the music that they played, with hits from either country serving as the backdrop to the shopping experience. Shops were arranged in ways similar to any local small supermarket, but where Oros would be, there was Mazoe; where Maggi Noodles would be, Indomie Noodles lined the shelves, and this continued. Shop owners could be seen sitting and chatting away about when stock would come in from Zimbabwe. In another store, women met and greeted each other and happily chatted in their home language. These shops, for a moment, offered a slice of home, for a fee, where people could buy ingredients from home and at the same time be surrounded by music, people and the feeling of being back home. This echoes the work of Mankekar (2002), Plaza

(2014) and Rabikowska and Burrell (2016), which speaks of the role of shopkeepers in the diaspora and how they capitalise on, and cater to, that need of migrants wanting slices of home in the host land. The way that these shopkeepers are also in tune with what products to supply to the different nationalities speaks to the important role of shopkeepers, as highlighted by Mankekar (2002).

In conversations with participants who managed to buy produce from home that would otherwise be difficult to get here, I found out that they used their networks to source ingredients from home. If they found a shop selling mackerel or cassava or Spanish olive oil – the list is endless – they would share it with the people within their networks and exchange information in that way, and only when all channels were exhausted, would they settle for local substitutes. Through this exchange and having these shops available, they could feed and maintain that part of them that echoed home.

4.2.6 Nostalgia and Comfort Food

Food, from my study, has even shown an ability to soothe feelings of longing by recreating that feeling of home for someone who has not been home in years, or one who is feeling homesick. As all of my participants were migrants who had not been home for varying degrees of time and reasons, the feeling of homesickness was different with each of them, but was a common occurrence. One thing that they all echoed was how consuming food from home evoked emotion, whether it was positive, as in most cases, or negative in some. Moods, in turn, also affected what was consumed, with many eating meals that reminded them of home when they were homesick; for example, with one of my participants who was from the Netherlands on an exchange programme here in South Africa:

> *"I am missing them, this is the longest I have been gone and so far, sometimes I cry. When I miss them, I make pancakes like I would at home, every Tuesday with my father and sister we make pancakes. It's our tradition you know"* – (Sunny, participant, 2018).

Eating these foods goes beyond satisfying a pang of hunger but instead, the smell, taste and even action of recreating these well-loved foods invokes memories and feelings which make home feel that much closer, and this "hostile" new environment less so. According to Spence (2017: 105), "comfort food refers to those foods whose consumption provides consolation or a feeling of well-being".

Food was not only comfort food in situations of homesickness, but was eaten when comfort was required; comfort in the sense of having argued with a partner, comfort in the sense of being home alone and being free to indulge in a guilty pleasure, and even comfort food in the sense of one's go-to snacks. For many of my participants, their comfort food had stayed the same for years, with many of them having acquired a taste for it when they were very young.

> *"My comfort food is mashed potatoes with lots of butter and milk, and cookies oh and carrot muffins! It just reminds me of being a child you know and makes me forget about all my troubles like I'm 10 again, with not a care in the world…"* – (Tanya, participant, 2018).

> "*That lentil soup is me, it's my comfort food. It's the cheapest thing ever!"* – (Rachel, participant, 2018).

Sometimes people choose a comfort food that they feel most relates to them: a secret self or a simple self, and this is evident in how none of the comfort foods are fancy. If anything, they are messy and things that they have often on their own. Comfort food, in these lives, offered an additional facet, as it unconsciously maintained that part of them that was reminiscent of home, a taste that had been developed when they were back home.

4.2.7 Presentation, Pride and Food

From the months in the field, I have found pride to be a recurring theme amongst my participants in various forms. Pride, in this sense, refers to the feeling of pleasure that participants would get from showcasing their food, culture and opening their homes to outsiders, especially in the case of this study. This has been largely as a result of them seeing their homes, kitchens and the food that they prepare as a reflection of them, not only in this study, but to the outsiders who may happen to see glimpses of their spaces and the food that they prepare. I often had to negotiate access, and sometimes I was barred from taking images, because the area was untidy or even worse, I was denied entry into a participant's home because she wanted to buy new pots before my coming there, as their pots could not be seen by me in the state that they were.

> *"…and I told you before that the first time that you were coming, when I told her you were coming my mom said 'she can't come mapoto akadai' (she can't come when the pots are like this) and I said there's no problem with that and she's like no that can't*

happen that's so embarrassing, and we couldn't have you over for a long time because of her pots" – (Tanya, participant, 2018).

People's self-worth has become intimately tied to their cooking and the presentation of one's kitchen. What others took for granted, held social implications. By her being a young single African woman, if I had been a possible suitor or had brothers looking for wives, by me enjoying her food, she could have found herself a husband, as food and good cooking are key attributes of a good wife in African culture. By her knowing how to cook, she becomes marriage material, as she is now a wife who can provide for, and feed, her family. On the other hand, not being able to cook is seen as a fault socially, as a true wife, a true African woman, should be able to cook, and cook well.

Pride was also evident in the ingredients that were used. Only the best quality ingredients were used, especially in the preparation of the food that "represented them". This was an option that I had given to my participants: for them to create a meal that best represented them, as the meals that they often prepared were not as elaborate as they would have wanted because, for example, with one participant, it was late in the evening or, with another, they had a church event to attend at 10am, and so we had to start cooking at 7am and be done in time for them to get to the venue.

In conversations, pride came up in the ways that people spoke of themselves and even their home countries. This fed into the ideas of, as previously mentioned, why some food was real, and how this echoed their upbringing and cultural beliefs, and the biases that they held with regards to themselves and their identity.

Participants took pride in their plating, often with many of them seemingly following a technique that they had adopted or been taught, to the point where several minutes would be spent staging a plate before I could take a photo. This goes back to this being visible to the world and them wanting to be the best possible representation of their homes. This is seen in literature as Korsmeyer and Sutton (2011) confirm that we eat with our eyes, with our vision sending us cues on how to receive the food before us; the perceived effort is desired and this shows the coordination of vision and taste (Korsmeyer and Sutton, 2011).

4.2.8 Tradition and Rituals in Cooking

Each home had different rituals around food. The first one would be around how the food was shared. For many of my participants, if they were alone, they had no problem with

where the food was had, whether it was in bed or on the couch; but the moment there was company, those who had dining tables would opt to eat around the table, as this was "the proper thing to do". If there were guests as well, they would often be served first and, in some homes, even the utensils and plates that were used would change, depending on who was coming to share the meal. In some homes, there was even an order of who got served first. So men, children and older people within the family groups were often served first and given first preference when it came to the food.

"Daily cooking, shopping and narratives about food constitute significant memories, as does ritual" (Counihan, 2002: 583). Other food rituals included saying grace before meals, and women feeding children before they ate. There were even rituals for when food was eaten, and also what food was eaten at a particular time. There were foods for special occassions, and these often had to be sourced from a particular place as they were traditional foods and often, the ingredients were not readily available at the local store.

All participants had, in some way, learnt to cook from someone in their family and drew on these lessons and recipes. These generational recipes were often followed strictly but, in moments where ingredients could not be found or a new flavour was experienced, adaptations would be made, as long as the taste remained "authentic". These meals are often made because they enjoy them but also, on a deeper level, to recreate the flavours of home and bring them closer to home. Having these shops that have ingredients from home goes a long way in the recreation of these recipes, and the act of going out to the market or shop, coming home to create these meals with the correct ingredients and the use of utensils from home could, on its own, be seen as a larger generational recipe. Often, these recipes are tied to memory and these meals serve as a way of reliving those special moments.

Below is a prayer that Sunny shared with me, that she learnt as a child and still said to this day:

Dutch Prayer for Food

"Aarde droeg het in haar schoot,
het zonlicht bracht het rijp en groot.
Zon en aarde die ons dit schenken, dankbaar zullen wij u gedenken.
Eet smakelijk allemaal!"

which translates to:

Earth carried it in her lap,
the sunlight made it ripe and big.
Sun and earth who give us this, thankfully we will remember you.
Enjoy your meal!

4.2.9 Conclusion - You Are What You Eat?

Having used memory to unpack the lives of these migrants, we see that there is a great entanglement between food and memory in the life of the migrant. Memory bridges the gap for the migrant between home and the host land and, in so doing, helps in creating a home away from home through the recreation of cultural practices, flavours and traditions. This chapter has shown the importance of the memories that we sometimes hold unconsciously in settling in and belonging. Where it would be easier to leave this story here and assume that we are what we eat, unfortunately, as much as what we eat contributes to who we are, there is a whole chapter still to explore in the story of these migrants' lives. In the next and final chapter of these findings, "Renegotiating a new identity through food", we explore who they are, now that they have made lives for themselves in South Africa. Can they continue to hold on to their identity from back home and avoid influence from the norms in South Africa? In the next chapter, we look at their identity and how the influence from their homelands and host lands impacts who they are; and finally, how they go about renegotiating a new identity for themselves.

4.3 Part 3: Renegotiating a New Identity Through Food

"Food, in the end, in our own tradition, is something holy. It's not about nutrients and calories. It's about sharing. It's about honesty. It's about identity" - Louise Fresco

4.3.1 Introduction

The narrative of this chapter is the renegotiation of a new identity. As part of the process of settling into their host country, the migrants are struck by a flood of new cultures and the initial response, as seen in the previous section, is to hold on to what is familiar, that is, their traditions and cultural practices from back home. Memories, in this instance, serve the role of actively remembering and seeking out the familiar to reinforce their home identity, as mentioned in the previous section. Over time though, as part of the acclimatisation process, they start adopting some of the behaviours and cultures of the people that they find themselves living with. This is not to say that they reject all of their traditions and adopt new ones, but rather, that they create a new identity that balances their homeland and their host land. Whilst participants are trying to create or renegotiate their identity in the host land, they also, in addition to this, struggle with their everyday challenges in renegotiating this identity on an individual and a social level.

This chapter will engage with these individual struggles and social challenges as my participants navigate their life with food and identity in the host land. This negotiation of identity is all about fitting in and not being othered and, to balance these two parts that now make up their identity, they create a dual identity. This chapter follows that journey with their new identity, which is a marrying of the old identity and the becoming of an identity that is inclusive of these new experiences that shape their new self. I have looked at the individual and social influences separately and, as a result, have put them as two sections; namely, renegotiating the individual self and renegotiating the social self.

4.3.1.1 Food and Identity

Food helps in shaping one's identity; from the food that we are exposed to as children, to the food choices that we make as adults. Food is a big part of culture and, through the cultural norms that we are exposed to, a large impact is made on our identity. Food, one could argue, is a tangible and edible element of culture. In previous chapters, we spoke of home and its importance when it comes to identity formation. Likewise, food is a fitting tool in shaping identity.

4.3.2 Renegotiating the Individual Self

4.3.2.1 The Daily Life of Making and Preparing Food: Negotiating Identity

When looking at who can cook, it is important to note the power that the person who is cooking holds. By looking at the work of Counihan (2004) on bread making, we see that the person who is cooking the food holds a certain power concerning those around them, and that power relationship governs the type of food that is consumed. The identity of that particular individual or, at the very least, the identity that they are trying to portray, then influences the food that they make, thus showing the entanglement of food and identity. To start the discussion around cooking and who could participate in the cooking process, I decided to start by looking at what cooking was to my participants. By definition, cooking is the practice or skill of preparing food by combining, mixing, and heating ingredients. For this research, I will be using the word "skill" to describe the ability to cook. This should not be confused with formalised training. It was of interest then, to see if my participants all shared the same ideas of what cooking was and, if not, then what the different perceptions and ideas around cooking were. They all stated that, for cooking to take place, there were ingredients that had to be brought together with heat to make a meal.

When it came to determining what was cooked and what was not, the heat was an important factor. Without heat, a dish could not be created and had not been cooked.

> *"…look at a salad for example, that's not cooking that is making; making a salad"* – (Alex, participant, 2018).

Another participant took the idea of cooking further by stating that recreating a meal with leftovers, regardless of heat being added was not cooking and was merely a repurposing of already cooked food.

> *"So let's say for example tomorrow we have some of this food leftover. I will probably use the fried potato and will use it to make an omelette but that's not cooking. It's using leftovers to make something new or nice is not cooking, it's still nice but it's not cooking"* – (Rachel, participant, 2018).

Although, in this case, an omelette is technically being cooked from scratch, because of its contact with leftovers, according to her reasoning, it cannot be considered to be cooking. This is not to say that all participants shared this same view as, for some, the

fact that a meal had been transformed and not merely been warmed up, meant that it took on a new form and could be considered to have been cooked.

Time and effort also went into consideration, as well, when judging whether something had been cooked or not. Boiling an egg, for example, was not cooking. Making popcorn, whether on the stove or in a microwave, was not cooking. Even steaming, in some respects, if done alone, was not considered to be cooking. In this case, the transformation that had taken place as a result of exposure to heat was acknowledged but, due to there not being a great effort on the part of the individual doing the "cooking", it did not count.

The discussion of cooking subsequently led to discussions about the ability to cook or rather, who had the skills. All participants felt that, much like any other activity, to be successful at cooking, one had to have some skills, and these had to be learnt. My participants felt that they, to varying degrees, were skilled in the kitchen and could produce decent enjoyable meals. This I can vouch for, to an extent. A question which then came up was where they had learnt to cook and where they had acquired these skills. All participants' cooking styles, according to their accounts, had been influenced by the people around them, some by more than one person. Over and above the influence of friends and family, almost every participant had developed a cuisine that best reflected their tastes, with many of them learning from recipe books and television shows. Many noted that, especially now that home was a distant land, they found themselves seeking the flavours of their home country, even foods and brands that they remembered but had never eaten.

> "...*it's really like if my mom cooks then, I don't know, you can't say you learn, but especially I cook the way my mom cooks. So, if I can make my soup the way she does but also I can change a few stuff. Like maybe, if I went to see someone cooking then it was taste different then I can ask her for that recipe"* – (Estelle, participant, 2018).

Many of the participants learnt how to cook through witnessing without even realising it, and through remembering, had been able to recreate the meals that they saw being made when they were younger, whether by their mother, father or grandmother.

Having determined what cooking was, I then went on to discover who could cook and, with this, also how duties were distributed within the household, with a particular focus on duties within the kitchen. I found that, although some had help around the home, they chose to do their cooking themselves, instead of allowing an outsider to handle their

meals. Some clearly stated that they would not accept a domestic aid handling their meals.

> *"You must never give someone else the cooking! You are giving them your house"* – (Estelle, participant, 2018).

> *"No, my wife will probably cook for me one day, she will be a better cook than me obviously *laughs* but for now I know what I like to eat, or I order… unless I am back home then my mom cooks"* – (Alex, participant, 2018).

> *"No, no. The cooking is mine, the way to a man's heart is through the stomach, I am the only one who cooks for him here"* – (Veronica, participant, 2018).

> *"No the maid just cleans you know like, ah, twice a week, I used to cook for the week on the weekend but now I just make something quick"* – (Diego, participant, 2018).

Some participants' reluctance towards help with the cooking of food stemmed from an engrained view that the kitchen is the woman's space to control, and so too is the food that is produced in this space. By allowing someone else to do the cooking, they are potentially allowing another woman into their home and subsequently, into their marriage. Fischer (2017) sheds some light on this by stating that providing for one's family is seen as a way of expressing love; which could be the underlying reason behind some participants not wanting to hand over that task to another person. This speaks largely to how there are gender roles within families and, because their identity was so heavily entwined with these roles, straying from these expectations made participants feel as though they were not being "proper" women or mothers. Appadurai (1988:7) comments on this by looking at the pressure that is often put on women to provide suitable meals for their families and states that,

> "[A]t the same time that she is dealing with these pressures to diversify her skills and add to her inventory of ethnic food specialities, the typical middle-class housewife also has another clientele, composed of her husband (in another, more primordial guise), her more traditional in-laws and other relatives, and important country cousins who crave food in the specialised mode of the region, caste, and community from which they originally come".

With the rest of the participants, cooking just seemed to be a task that they wanted to do themselves, since they knew what was to their liking. This was also the same for participants who lived alone, as they were accustomed to taking care of the chores in their homes. For those who lived with spouses or roommates and did not have domestic

help, cooking often fell upon them, or whoever was at home around the time that dinner needed to be made; unless of course, someone was really in the mood to cook on a particular day. In households where more than one individual was present, without the assistance of domestic help, duties would be split in the sense of one cooks, and the other cleans.

> *"It depends, if Ben is here then I'm likely to cook than you are likely to cook, but if I am here first then I will cook. If you are here first or if we are here together then you are likely to cook. If I lust for something specific, if I feel like something specific like something Capetonian then I will cook that's the thing, on a Sunday weekend, I am likely to cook because I like to cook on a Sunday"* – (Kevin, participant, 2018).

> *"…*exclaims*…very unfairly…I don't think they are distributed fairly [duties in the house] because like I go to school at 7, no 8 or 9 and then my day starts I go to school and then I finish around 3 or 4 then usually to save money, I stay at school and then leave for Bible school, which ends at around 9 and my day starts at 8am until half 9 when I get home every single day. Then I get home, then usually the house is normally messy showing no one cleaned it or there's not like food, there won't be food. They would have, because I don't like pap so they will cook pap or something. Also Chloe, my little sister, will cook for my mom then she just fends for herself and then you will find that there is no food leftover for me then I have to make my own stuff… I guess it is safe to say that I have weird eating habits…so more often than not they won't leave me anything…"* – (Tanya, participant, 2018).

From all of these accounts on cooking and who gets to cook, one thing is evident, which is the power that the person who cooks holds, whether it is every day or occasionally. The topic of duties within the house and how they are distributed was a sensitive one, often eliciting impassioned responses from participants who felt that they had to carry the bulk of the cleaning and cooking within the homes. This echoed possibly skewed power dynamics within the families between parents and their children, and between spouses.

Identity, in the field, influenced the participants' food choices; whether it was to remember their past or even to fit in, it influenced the type of food that they were making and consuming. Memory, therefore, played a key role as, through remembering, they were able to reinforce their identity; remembering took place in the rituals and habits that were repeated from past witnessed events.

Who can cook speaks of a power that one has in the kitchen, and this governs identity. On days when one is feeling vulnerable or homesick, and the assumption of taking on a new identity is taking a toll, whoever is in charge of meal preparation has the power to reconnect with their identity by choosing to consume their previous identity. More of this will be discussed in the following section on comfort food.

4.3.2.2 Mood, Food and Comfort Food

There is seemingly an interplay between food and mood, as I found that the food one ate was dependent on many factors, and mood played a large role, whether consciously or unconsciously, on what participants ate. Mood played a role on what was cooked or not on that day and several participants noted how, if they were in a great mood, they were more likely to cook intricate meals "with all the finishings", or even go out to celebrate an achievement. On the other hand, if they were unhappy or exhausted, they would not cook and often order something in or, if they were to cook, they would make something quick such as soup, or opening a can of something. This brings to mind the words "leaving one's heart on a plate", where what one is eating is a representation of what they are feeling. One participant interestingly noted how baking always made her feel better, even when she was not in a great mood. Because of the memories of baking with her mother that were attached to this "everyday" action, to her, it was no longer an ordinary act, but had become transformative, as it now had the power to affect her mood.

> "*I love baking, I bake when I am happy, I also bake when I am not happy, I just haven't baked a lot since my oven keeps failing me but now I have the waffle iron so it's not so bad"* – (Irene, participant, 2018).

Comfort did not only come as a result of cooking or baking, as in the quote above. Sometimes, even just the presence of food was enough to lift a mood or soothe discomfort. A participant noted how she had developed a self-soothing technique of going on a food spree, for when she was stressed. Although she was unaware of when she had started this habit, she had realised a pattern with her carrying out this action and having stressful situations to deal with. Here, eating the food was not the focus, but instead, having access to it.

> *"When I am stressed out I want to eat everything and nothing at all. So often I will walk into a shop, it doesn't matter which shop, and I will buy whatever I see that looks appealing to me, chips, a sandwich, a roll, whatever. Although I never actually manage*

to finish it all in that day, some of it ends up being thrown away because I am not actually hungry, which I know is wasteful don't judge me; but that ability to buy the food and simply just have it there gives me comfort and eases what bad feelings I have in that moment and this is only when I am stressed, weird I know" – (Tanya, participant, 2018).

Food, therefore, is not only a form of sustenance, but can change one's mood from anger to happiness, for example, when one has their favourite meal, or vice versa when a meal is unpleasant. Participants also spoke of hunger and how unpleasant hunger pangs were, as they not only affected one's mood, but even one's concentration. Without being addressed, this could negatively affect their entire day as well as their interactions. People could often tell that they were hungry, not through hunger pangs as they sometimes would be unaware, simply because of how busy they were; instead they often knew that they were hungry as they would get "hangry", referring to the anger that one experiences when they are hungry, and that bad mood would often be resolved once a meal had been consumed.

"…I tend to get hangry if I wait too long. That's why I prefer to always have breakfast…sometimes I don't realise until only after I have eaten and I don't like that" – (Alex, participant, 2018).

In addition to this, my participants noted that, not only could hunger negatively change their mood but, in some cases, even the quality of the food could affect one's mood. Below, Estelle speaks of how she was beginning to feel lethargic from having to eat fast food each night and had to cook just so that she could feel "normal" again. Another person could have eaten the same food and not felt out of sorts but, for her, because it was so different from her normal routine, her body was distressed and gave a negative response.

"*I have been so busy and haven't been cooking nowadays, but now I really need to cook because I think that's really what makes me feel so bad [physically]. I need to eat nicely*" – (Estelle, participant, 2018).

Another aspect of food, especially comfort food, that I found interesting, although not the case for all participants, was the idea of secret food. As one participant calls it, "the other one is away" food. Essentially, this is food that they eat when their partner is out of town. What makes this different from comfort food is how it is kept secret.

"*We both have a dish that we do when the other one is away but when the other one is here we don't because maybe we see it's too basic or, and then we discovered actually in both cases the other one actually likes the dish… mine is rice and beans"* – (Kevin, participant, 2018).

"*Mine is lentils and it's really true it's the first thing I'll make when he is gone. I'll make lentils but not if he is here... I wouldn't make that because I wouldn't think that they would think of it as a proper meal"* – (Rachel, participant, 2018).

These secret foods are kept hidden, not because they are not good food or that they are not appealing in taste; instead, they are hidden because of the lack of effort in the preparation of the food. Where comfort foods can be shared, secret foods are meant to be private. Food and its preparation have now come to be associated with tricks and the "wow factor" and so, when there is no grand preparation, presentation or performance, people feel that it is inadequate.

4.3.2.3 Food Choices

Across many cultures and in many dishes, meat is often the focal point of the meal, with countless recipes for meat dishes, and with even certain meats, becoming synonymous with many traditions across the world. For example, turkey is synonymous with Thanksgiving in America, and ham and gammon are considered to be Christmas meats. In South Africa, Heritage Day is celebrated with *wors* (a South African sausage) being a prominent part of the day. Although there has been growing interest and popularity in veganism and vegetarianism (Ginsberg, 2017), I had not sought to research these trends, but I had not been closed off to them.

In the field, when participants spoke of their food identity, it seemed to be shaped either as a meat-eater or as a vegetarian, and as this was one of the first things to come up, I soon realised that food choices were big shapers of identity, particularly whether they ate meat or not. Meat-eating is seen as currency in African culture; if you eat meat, then you are seen as wealthy, and the more meat on your plate, the more wealth you are perceived to have. On the other hand, Europe, for example, has seen a wave of varying food choices, with a big part being vegetarianism or veganism. Over and above the complexities of the food relationships and negotiations of their dual identities, what also influenced the food identities of my participants and what they consumed was the trends taking place, as referenced in Chapter 2. For example, in my study, my Dutch participants

chose to be vegetarian for ethical reasons, although they would occasionally eat meat or fish. As discussed in the previous section, the power of who cooks influences these choices, and so, even if there is an ethical choice beyond this, the power of the cook overrides this positioning, for example, with Rachel eating meat when Kevin cooks.

> "*Kevin also sometimes cooks meat, not with a good vegetarian option for me, and so then I'll eat the meat"* – (Rachel, participant, 2018).

Here, Rachel who self identifies as a vegetarian for ethical reasons, notes how she will sometimes eat meat, not because she wants to, but because there is no meat alternative available for her and, rather than cause conflict or "make a fuss", she will just eat what is there.

On the other hand, my other participants who are predominantly from parts of Africa, spoke about meat because the meat is a representation of masculinity; it is a symbol of wealth and that is why eating meat is so important. But even within this, there were outliers, and from this came the idea of meat as a side dish, and meat even being used as a seasoning. This notion first came up with a participant who only ate meat occasionally, and was explaining how, unlike in many homes, meat had to be on the plate in the order of starch, meat and vegetables. In her home, meat was optional, and the meal was centred on what vegetables they were eating instead. This did not surprise me as she was a vegetarian; but what amazed me was that I went to two other homes that were not vegetarian who used meat for seasoning – in one home, shrimp was used to season vegetables and in another, beef was used to lend flavour to rice, with fish being the main protein source. What was interesting to me was that meat, which is supposed to be the central dish, was also used as a side or as a seasoning, almost as though as long as the meat was incorporated, then it has some sort of symbolic representation, and that alone was enough.

4.3.2.4 "Woolworths"

Although this theme could fall under both individual and social influences, I will discuss it here from my participants' perspective, which would be an individual perspective. Shopping at Woolworths was unlike shopping at ordinary shops as it had implications for how they would be perceived socially, and this was an individual narrative. The shopping trips allowed me to see each of the participants away from the kitchen. It is here that I got

a glimpse into who they were, and where I had conversations with them about ordinary day-to-day occurrences. It is also where I got to witness their shopping behaviour and the stores that they frequented. On these trips, I also learnt about how, depending on how good a month was, or how close it was to payday, they would select specific stores for grocery shopping. One name that kept coming up was Woolworths.

"These Woolworths potatoes" – (Rachel, participant, 2018).

"I do my shopping at Woolworths, they have the things from home" – (Diego, participant, 2018).

"When I can I get my fruits and yoghurt from Woolworth's" – (Estelle, participant, 2018).

Woolworths can be considered as one of the most successful retail chains in South Africa, having been modelled after the English brand, Marks and Spencer (Yoffie and St. George, 1997). Woolworths, in post-apartheid South Africa, is associated with a consumption culture that is entangled with class. Eastman *et al.* (1999) as referenced by Eastman *et al.* (2012: 58) argue on the principle of consumption culture of luxury brands by stating that "individuals strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolise status both for the individual and surrounding significant others". Similarly, this has appeared in my research around how my participants identify with shopping at Woolworths.

With its primary target being the middle class and the wealthy (Mortimer, 2014), there is a status associated with shopping at Woolworths, as evidenced by the social media phenomenon, the "Woolworths Water Challenge"[2] in 2019. Because of how well established the brand is, some biases are associated with the brand, as evidenced by my participants who unconsciously distinguished Woolworths products from other retail chains such as Pick n Pay, Spar, Checkers and Shoprite[3]. There was also the assumption that the products from Woolworths were better, healthier and fresher, with those who could not afford to do their full shopping there, opting for the fresh produce to at least be from Woolworths. This speaks to the idea of class attached to shopping at Woolworths and the image that they want to portray, having been identified as someone who shops at such an expensive and exclusive place. This was seen with participants making a

[2] https://www.businessinsider.co.za/woolworths-water-challenge-2019-3

[3] Pick n Pay, Spar, Checkers and Shoprite are food retail stores in South Africa

specific effort to mention that their ingredients had been bought from Woolworths, and yet this effort was not made when items were bought from any other supermarket.

With Woolworths, some participants were able to “shop their culture”, but this was more so with participants from Europe; for example, with Sunny who was able to get *stroopwafels*, and Diego who was able to get good quality *chorizo*. In these cases, there was not a need for them to seek out specific shops to meet their need for a slice of home. Also, Rachel had found a Spar in her neighbourhood, Bedfordview, that stocked primarily European food, and yet, very few shops prided themselves on stocking food from different African regions. There was not much for participants who were seeking African ingredients from back home. For a store in an African country, that caters to African consumers, Woolworths proved to have a very limited offering of African food and instead, catered to a very specific market.

Finally, there seemed to be a social guilt attached to Woolworths amongst participants. There was almost an unmentioned need to justify why they shopped there. Although the feeling of having made it was desired, there was also seemingly a need to draw back from coming across as too well-off, lest it again created a divide between them and everyone else. Participants felt the need to clarify, or even justify, that buying from Woolworths was not an everyday thing, that they could not afford it and it seemed contradictory to reality. This was all to fit in, as being identified as a “classy” person would gain them acceptance but also, at the same time, not being too classy to be deemed alien and unfamiliar. I believe that this is because they did not want to appear as well-off, nor did they want me to assume that they were “snobs” for shopping at Woolworths, as mentioned by Tanya, and expressed in Alex’s quote below.

> *“I believe in quality not quantity, I mean I don’t shop everything at Woolies though, but the essentials I do like fruits, juice etc”* – (Alex, participant, 2018).

As much as shopping at Woolworths is an individual choice, it sets a precedent for how one is socially perceived. In the section to follow, I am going to engage with the social renegotiation of identity through the food of participants in the study.

4.3.3 Renegotiating the Social Self

4.3.3.1 Eating the Other

An interesting finding was that of consuming the culture of the other but, unlike the typical cuisines such as Italian, Indian or Mediterranean, it was the consumption of African food, and more so, how African food was exotic, even in Africa. Some participants mentioned seeking out Nigerian or Cameroonian food, and sometimes South African food, when they were feeling adventurous or craving a particular taste.

> *"It doesn't have to be egusi[4] or anything fancy. Sometimes, when I feel like I'm out of touch and have been eating too much "white" food I can even just go to the buses spend my R40 and get my plate yesadza nemuriwo (pap and vegetables) and I'll be fine"* – (Paida, participant, 2018).

This speaks largely to our political histories in Africa. We have a very western and mainstream ideology of how to consume and buy food. If we look at the example of Veronica, who mentioned earlier that she loves eating pasta, much like Tanya and many others did, although pasta is not South African. This would be more acceptable than "exotic African food" here in South Africa, as South Africa has a history of people politically, socially and economically hugely influencing the country, and now, through partnerships, networks and relationships, people are consuming what is more in line with western ideology, rather than what is African.

Another interesting finding was that of African migrants seeking out food from other African countries. In reflection of Duruz's (2009:46) term consumer cannibalism, as referenced in Chapter 2, we could draw comparisons with what is happening amongst participants in this study. Concepts such as "cultural food colonialism" (Van Esterik, 2008), and other similar terms, often hint at underlying power dynamics but, in my study, I found that the consumer cannibalism was present amongst this migrant group more so because the food was exotic, and so people were just simply after that which they were not traditionally accustomed to. This consumption of food from other regions of the world was also done as a form of negotiation of identity; by consuming what is unfamiliar to you, it keeps you closer to what you are, than actually consuming something that everyone

[4] Egusi – a popular West African soup made with egusi seeds

can identify with. Due to this, people then actively seek the other through their shopping and also through experiencing different restaurants; as stated by Appadurai (1988), “but restaurants, both humble and pretentious, have increasingly become arenas for the transcendence of ethnic difference and for the exploration of the culinary Other”.

By African migrants consuming food from other African countries, they were using this as a tool of acceptance and as a tool to renegotiate their identity. This consumption made them feel a part of a whole, as opposed to just the country they were from, and through this, they could renegotiate an African identity, which is ultimately what they are part of in the host land. Thus, this could be seen by the migrants as a way of reinstating their status as Africans, rather than constantly negotiating between their homeland and the host land. This arguably could be a new form of consumer cannibalism – migrants consuming migrants.

4.3.3.2 Consuming Identity Through Relationships

The time spent in the field revealed a complex relationship that individuals have with food, and even how food shaped their relationships. Often, one’s food choices were not simply a matter of the individual’s choice, but were affected by those that they lived with, whether it was a spouse, their children or parents.

> “*I love eating pasta, if I had to choose something that best represented me it would be pasta but I don’t cook it a lot at home as my husband loves eating our traditional food…”* – (Veronica, participant, 2018).

> *“JJ doesn’t like very much this thing of takeaways, so I try and cook food from home always when he is here”* – (Estelle, participant, 2018).

The above examples reflect how several participants ate foods that were not necessarily to their liking in order to cater to everyone else’s tastes, essentially putting others needs before their own. Individuals often feel the need to make more effort when they are sharing a meal with other people. This was not only common with people who had partners, but sometimes, even meal components would be changed when guests were visiting. This, in many ways, echoes the way that we have been taught to socialise, to be considerate and, in some cases, even put the needs of others before our most basic needs. Fischer (2017) alludes to this when he speaks of how feeding and providing for one’s family is so important as it is seen as a way of expressing love. In this case, maybe

accepting a bit of discomfort is seen to be okay for the greater good for the household. Beyond this desire to provide and to express love, there is power at play. This speaks to the work of Foucault, as discussed by Taylor (2012), where familial power comes into play. Here, we have women who are discussing how their food choices are impacted by their spouses; here the authority of the spouse, although not stated or outwardly addressed, is governed by the blood conquest, and so there is unspoken power at play, even in something as simple as what will be eaten.

In conversations around relationships and food, participants highlighted how a meal could be transformed based on whom it was being shared with. The act of eating is transformed into a social event when in good company. Which is why people may have lunch and coffee dates, not only to satisfy that need to eat, but also to satisfy a social hunger. On the other hand, it was mentioned that eating could just as easily be a chore when there are tensions around a meal, or one is eating around people they are unfamiliar with. One participant, in particular, spoke fondly of how eating was a "survival" sport growing up, as he was often not allowed to leave the table until he had cleared his plate, although now that he is older and has children of his own, he understands the concept. He notes that the meals shared around the table back home, although not done daily, had caused him to feel distressed as a child.

> *"…in that house it was all about survival. She wouldn't let you leave the table until that plate was empty! Ah muriwo futi shaa! (Ah vegetables, again!)"* – (Alex, participant, 2018).

4.3.3.3 South African Food Is Not Real Food

This journey of bringing together the two cultures is not an easy one. There is often a lot of resistance towards the host country's culture in order to hold on to what they know and are comfortable with. With this, comes stereotypes that they pass on within their communities. Before moving to South Africa, I remember how we would always be told that everyone has a gun, and that if you live in South Africa, you will get shot. I can say, thankfully, that after thirteen years of living here, I have not been shot. This may have been a reality for some people, but it does not mean that it will be a reality for everyone, and these stereotypes are often about the smallest things; but, with all stereotypes, they stem from a lack of understanding or fear of another. There were also stereotypes around food, as I learned whilst in the field. I listened, on different occasions, as different

participants spoke to me about “real food” and “South African food”, as though South African food was separate from what might be called real food. Some of the examples of this are referenced in the previous chapter.

If we take the analogy of “you are what you eat” (Vartanian *et al.*, 2007) into consideration, then surely the opposite should be true: “You are not what you do not eat”, and on an unconscious level, this is what migrants fight towards to stay true to who they are or, at least, the understanding of who they are. They find themselves in a country where their identity is questioned, as there is no representation of what they know, and are constantly confronted by cultures that are different from their own; and, if food holds such cultural significance, and food facilitates memory creation and rewriting (Sutton, 2011), then it would make sense as to why they would refuse to consume the “unrealness” of South African food and the South African ways of being, as it questions or threatens the cultural norms and flavours that they have built their identity on.

What they perceived to be real food was food that they were familiar with; food that was attached to a memory, a smell or an occasion that they remembered, and this all connected to their identity, as it reinforced their past, and was such an important part of the identity that they had known for so long. Food went beyond this in its ability to take them back to times past, effectively allowing them to travel home mentally and therefore, reinforce who they were. In the host land, participants were wearing a mask. The mask was put in place as a way of saying that they were willing to do whatever it took for them to fit in because belonging mattered and belonging meant not being othered. Participants were, therefore, performing food as, even though South African food was not real food to them, they were willing to put on this mask; but, when needed, they would use and consume flavours and tastes that they were familiar with and therefore, use food as a vessel of remembering.

4.3.3.4 Language

A common theme that I picked up on during my engagements with participants was that of identity and navigating a new identity. During the conversations that I had, my participants noted and reflected on how, in the process of getting familiar with their new home, they started picking up on certain behaviours; whether it was in the way that they spoke, the slang that they used, the food that they ate and even the shows that they

watched. These actions were not premeditated, but happened naturally, as they were exposed to their new environment and picked up on things that they liked.

In these conversations around the behaviours and characteristics that they had picked up, language came up often, whether to explain why they had not picked up on any, or why and how they had picked it up. Language, I came to understand, played a key role in their feeling of belonging as they remarked that, especially among black South Africans, language was a way of getting an entryway into their communities and being accepted; but also, it was seen as though you were making an effort to fit in. Language was actively learnt to aid with communication; not that people here in South Africa cannot understand English but, depending on the area, if a black person spoke to another black person in English, there was an assumption that they were not South African or that they thought they were better than the person they were speaking to and were trying to be "white"; in which case, neither of these scenarios would help them in being accepted and would serve as another way of further alienating themselves. The work of Von Grünigen *et al.* (2010), although it was on children in preschool, supports this finding by speaking about the alienation that migrants face when they are incapable of speaking local languages and, on the other hand, are more accepted if they can speak a local language. Below is a quote from a participant explaining how she works around the language issue.

> *"I have been here since 2012 and to be honest I struggle with the languages, but I will still speak that broken Zulu or whatever. It's better than speaking English. Especially in the taxi I even try and do the accents otherwise if you come there speaking twangy English everyone will know you are not from here. Have you ever had the entire taxi turn back to look at you when you answer the phone?!"* – (Tanya, participant, 2018).

Another participant goes further in explaining that, depending on where one is from, there are different pressures and expectations, noting that if you are African, people in South Africa do not take lightly to you not speaking a local language. Notably, European participants did not speak of having been put under pressure to learn a local language, but the Dutch-speaking participants mentioned how Afrikaans was very similar to their home language, and so it made it easier for them to understand and communicate here in South Africa.

> *"There is a pressure for us [African migrants] to learn a language here but I don't think it's the same for everyone. It depends on where you come from if you're not black or*

from these parts, they either celebrate you or they don't care" – (David, participant, 2018).

The conflict that they faced was not only within the country that they found themselves in, but there was also a conflict within the home and maintaining the culture of home. Some participants remarked on how, when they would go home to visit or when they came across people who used to know them, they would be told about how much they have changed. This was unsettling to a few participants, who worried that they were now outsiders in the communities that they used to be a part of. They perceived this change to be a negative one and one that made it difficult for those who once knew them to relate to them.

"When I go back home, people always remark on how I have changed, hanzi ndamu sasko manje (they say I'm now South African), but I know I haven't changed. The only thing that is different about me is where I live" – (Paida, participant, 2018).

This, again, speaks of the conflict of what is real and what is unreal and so, what is familiar is considered real, and what is unfamiliar becomes unreal; only now because they are adapting to a new culture, they too have now become unfamiliar to those who once knew them. Migrants take on new ways of life in the new country but being linked to a place in the old country means that their identity is always partly made of it (Alder, 2015). This is why, when their authenticity is questioned or they become unrecognisable to their own, it causes distress, as it poses a threat to their rootedness and sense of belonging. This is also why markets and shops in the host land, that not only offer produce from home, but allow them to momentarily be surrounded by people who share the same culture and speak the same language as them, are so important. By being with others who are like them, experiencing music, food and language that they are familiar with, they can feel at home.

4.3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked particularly at the complex relationship between identity, consuming culture, maintaining a home identity and creating a new identity. Food is central to negotiating identity, but also, to maintaining an identity. By observing these daily behaviours that my participants exercised, we see clues of who they are and their identity. Torresan (2008) states that identity is not found in fixed places, but rather in people's stories and daily rhythms. This chapter also engaged with the challenges involved with

the renegotiation of identity. The renegotiation happens with boundaries and these boundaries are generally pushing people to the periphery. People who are not migrants may struggle to identify with the quest or search of what my participants are looking for, as they cannot understand that sense of longing, and the pursuit of nostalgia whilst, at the same time, relying on their memory to keep a cultural identity, a dual identity, alive.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

My study was focused on unpacking the food narratives of foreign nationals from around the world who had relocated to Johannesburg. This was done in an effort to understand the role that food played in the adjustment journey of a migrant in an otherwise unfamiliar environment, and this chapter has been put together in order to summarise all of the information gathered as part of this research paper. At the beginning of this research process I had questions, listed in Chapter 1, that I wanted to address in an effort to best capture the nuances of each individual's story.

To unpack these questions, I first needed to look towards literature to see the body of work that had been done around food and migration. This led me to a multitude of themes that I arranged under four main headings namely; Migration, Home, Identity and Memory. From the literature, the main take away message was that the process of leaving one's homeland for another country was not an easy one, and often migrants had to come up with coping mechanisms to help with the adjustment process and feelings of loss accompanied with such a big move. As a result, communities would often be built in the host land, known as diasporic communities, and they would help with the adjustment process through allowing for a space to consume the familiar. The idea of home was big to migrants, and was challenging to put down as one concept due to its subjective nature, but home was largely a place bound by the memories, especially food memories, associated with it. Through eating food from home, home was more accessible. Food also served the role of reinforcing and shaping identity in the host land and finally, memory allowed for traditions to be kept alive through remembering.

My findings section was separated into three sections. The first section "Pleased to meet you, pleased to eat your food" served as an introductory section that introduced the reader to the participants in this study. This section reinforced a point that came up in the literature review about home meaning different things to different people. Be that as it may, the participants in my study often struggled with feelings of "home sickness", and in an effort to deal with this, they attempted to recreate home in the host land, and food was a big part of that recreation. Food in the host land went beyond nutrition, as it took on many forms as a tool of communication, instruction and remembrance.

The second section “Maintaining echoes of home” is a section that was focused on the migrants’ need to maintain their home identity. For this section, I used memory as a framework through which to unpack the experiences of my participants. Memory played a significant role in the lives of migrants and was used in the host land as a strategy for maintenance, due to them being able to access the past through their memories. Memories allowed for the maintenance of home and recreation of culture in the host land, with participants crediting their ability to remember as a coping mechanism in moments of home sickness and loneliness, by making home more accessible. Memories were often triggered by familiar tastes or smells in the host land.

A hunger for home led to the distinction between what my participants referred to as “real food” and “non-real food”. Through inquiring about what real food was, it turned out that, although all of these participants had different backgrounds, what they perceived to be real food was their food from back home, with everything else not being real food. From this, we can draw the conclusion that, what is familiar is real, and this is largely about maintaining an identity and finding comfort through the familiar in an otherwise unfamiliar environment. What was interesting to learn was that shop owners, realising and understanding this need to consume the familiar amongst migrants, capitalised on this (Mankekar, 2002) as mentioned in Chapter 2. Shop owners, therefore, sold the flavours and experiences of home and, although the prices were marked up, this did not deter my participants, and other patrons alike, from going to these shops to purchase a slice of home.

Finally, the third section of my Findings chapter was titled “Renegotiating a new identity through food” and the focus of this section, as the title states, is on the renegotiation of a new identity. As mentioned previously, although the initial response was to maintain the familiar through memory as well as seeking out and consuming the familiar, this changed overtime as participants began adopting behaviours and cultures from the host land. This was not easy and they each had to navigate around individual struggles and social challenges as part of renegotiation of identity.

I would like to end off by saying that food, in its universality, is still subject to experience, tradition and culture, with what is understood to be food to one, not constituting as food to another. Food offered my participants the opportunity to redefine themselves through the consumption of the other and building their identity from what they enjoy, rather than what they were born into or exposed to. In its ability to add colour and flavours to

memories, food has contributed to cultural traits being remembered, passed on and recreated. Food is important because of how often people eat, as well as the community around its preparation and consumption; the once lonely migrant now has community through the retailing of home in the diaspora. Food's ability to move across borders has helped in the resettling of the migrant in an otherwise unfamiliar landscape.

To conclude, I would like to share the story below from one of my participants, as I feel that it brings some of my findings to light and also offers a glimpse into some of the feelings around food and migration from the migrant's perspective.

5.2 The Story of Tanya

Tanya is a vibrant young lady who has been living in South Africa for almost a decade now, since having left Zimbabwe. She has embraced the surrounding food cultures as her own and is always ready to learn a new recipe from her friends. Her pots have tasted different foods from Malawi, South Africa, Nigeria, and Mozambique. Although she admits that she sometimes misses home, she describes the feeling as one of feeling left out when others travel home, but not necessarily a feeling of her desiring to go back to Zimbabwe. In moments of nostalgia, she goes to Johannesburg CBD and buys foodstuffs such as sweet potatoes from Zimbabwe, Maputi (popped maize), Cerevita cereal and peanut butter so she can indulge in Zimbabwean delicacies.

That being said, Tanya always emphasises that she does not really miss home but rather, she just misses the food sometimes, which is easily accessible in South Africa, and she occasionally misses the peaceful atmosphere of Zimbabwe, along with some of the memories that she has created back there. One could say that she has embraced South Africa as her home, except for the moments of the stark awareness of her status as a foreigner. She describes moments in which she cannot access a job opportunity, or log in on some online platforms as the system does not recognise her passport number. In moments like that, she remembers that she is not South African and, at the same time, realises that she has been long out of the game in Zimbabwe and would not survive if she went back.

In such moments, she feels homeless and wonders where else she can go. She describes how dejected she feels when she hears people talk about how South Africa is headed towards ruin and that people should start fleeing. She wonders where else she can flee to when she already sought solace in South Africa. Will she be a wanderer all her life? In

which country will her children be able to live a normal healthy life? She finally declares that she will do her best to make South Africa feel like home, for stability's sake.

Food has helped Tanya connect to her home roots of Zimbabwe, and might be the only aspect of her home that she still appreciates and engages with. She animatedly describes how organic Zimbabwean food is, and laments at how much she gained weight after settling down in South Africa. "The GMO food is to blame!" She describes Zimbabwean food as being natural, organic and cheap. One item of food she misses is the brown bread which, at the same price as the white bread, comes with a handful of nuts that one can snack on whereas, in South Africa, bread with nuts is expensive as compared to white bread. It is these small differences in food that make her yearn for parts of Zimbabwe to be in South Africa.

A reason why Tanya is so comfortable with the thought of residing in South Africa is her mother and sister, who live in South Africa with her. She describes how it is only her extended family that remains in Zimbabwe since her father died, so she does not see any reason to visit. There is no emotional excitement at the thought of going to Zimbabwe because, since her family is not there, it is not really a home. It is just a country she happens to have been born in. She describes home as being where the heart is and how she used to think that was just a statement, but since her father died and she no longer has interest in Zimbabwe, she realised how true it was. If her mother was in Zimbabwe, she would probably go to Zimbabwe once or twice a year and enjoy her mother's cooking and come back to South Africa bearing different types of Zimbabwean food, but since her mother is here with her in South Africa, home is essentially where she goes back to at the end of each working day, with the warmth and comfort of her loved ones waiting for her.

With Tanya's story, we get a beautiful experience of how she perceives home. Home to her is not the patriotic ties to Zimbabwe, nor is it the house she grew up in, or even the walls she currently lives within today. Home, for Tanya, is ever-changing; where her family and heart are, there is her home. Home to Tanya is about belonging and family (Torresan, 2008; Boer, 2014; Rabikowska and Burrell, 2016), as we have seen mentioned by some authors throughout this study; but what is important to note are the earlier mentioned words of Andits (2015): belongingness is only one possible reaction or emotion to feel towards home. This is important to remember in a study with ten different participants and in a world with millions of migrants; the experiences of home, and the perceptions of what home is, are different in each situation. For Tanya, Zimbabwe is not "back home" but

rather, a country where she was born, and a place that she consumes when she is feeling nostalgic, through seeking out its tastes and the flavours of Zimbabwe that still linger in her mind.

With that consumption of Zimbabwe comes a realisation that it is not a place where she can survive, given the situation and the life that she has become accustomed to; nor is South Africa her home, as there are often reminders of her being foreign. Home for Tanya is now a liminal, spiritual place, transcending both time and space (Boer, 2014). Home means so many different things in different contexts and, for migrants, this experience hangs in a balance of tensions and the bittersweet experiences of pursuing a better life, while on the other hand, having to let go of what was familiar and was once the foundation of one's identity. The most accessible way of reconciling with this past would seem to be the consumption and recreation of food cultures that have weaved their way into memory and sneak up on the unsuspecting migrant when a familiar smell or taste makes a reappearance. Food becomes the hero of this story, from being able to unite people around a familiar meal or offer comfort to the homesick migrant.

5.3 Recommendations

The strengths of this research lie in its ability to highlight the importance of each individual's story and also highlight the uniqueness of each story and the colour that it adds to a collective story. I also feel that my study focuses on food and its importance beyond nutrition; nutrition is important but, as indicated above, food is so much more than sustenance. This study has shown a different and important side to migrants and their experiences from within their own homes, which is not always possible. When I consider the weakness of my study, it is on how my findings were presented. If situations had allowed, I would have wanted to present my research as a film. I feel that the stories that I experienced in the field, as well as the creativity and hospitality of my participants, would have been best shared on video where everyone could see how each individual took unassuming ingredients and turned them into the most delicious meals. For future research, I would want a study such as this one to be video-based, in order to capture all of the emotion and beauty that makes up each food story.

***Please Note**: I have also compiled some of my favourite recipes from this research journey and these can be found in my appendix section.*

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Food Is Where The Heart Is: The Food Narratives of Foreign National Living in Johannesburg

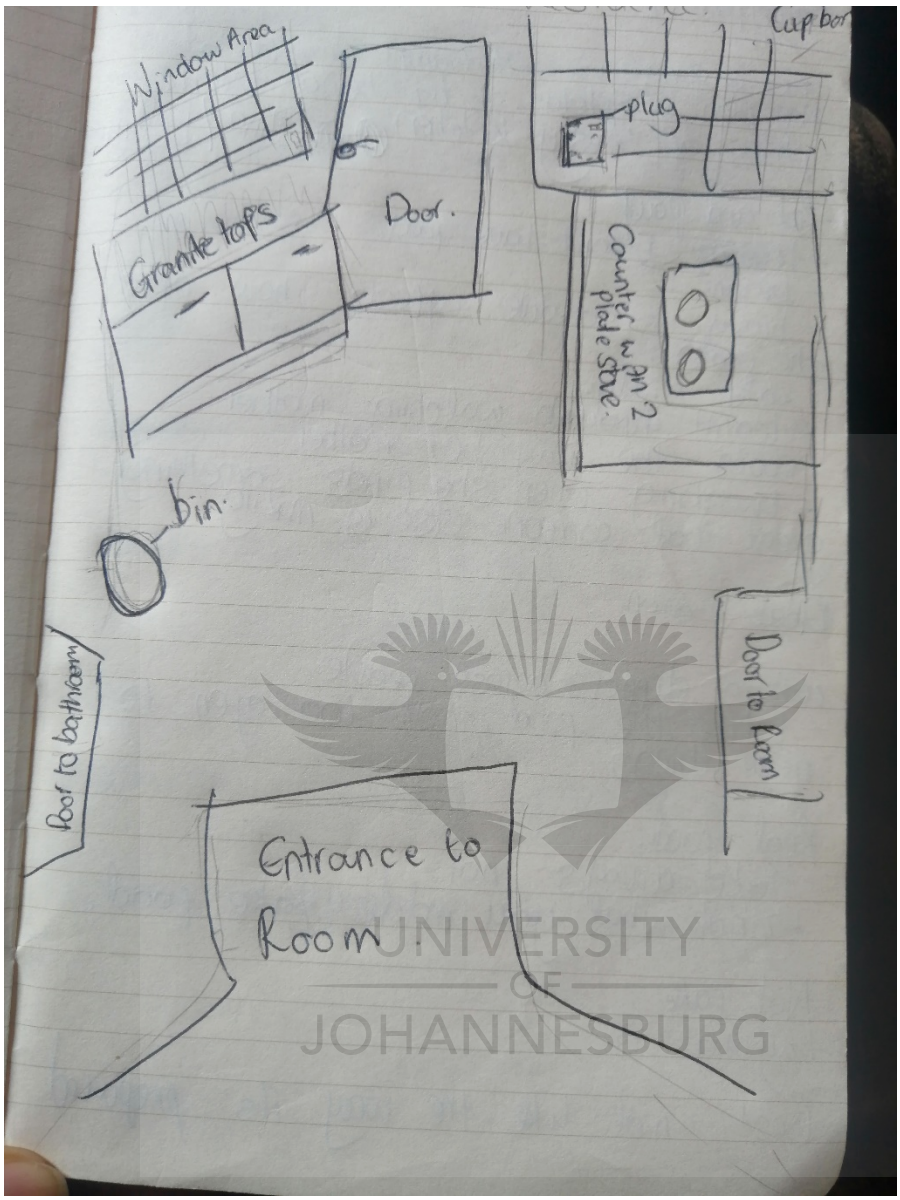
Name of Researcher: Vimbai Mawela

I ……

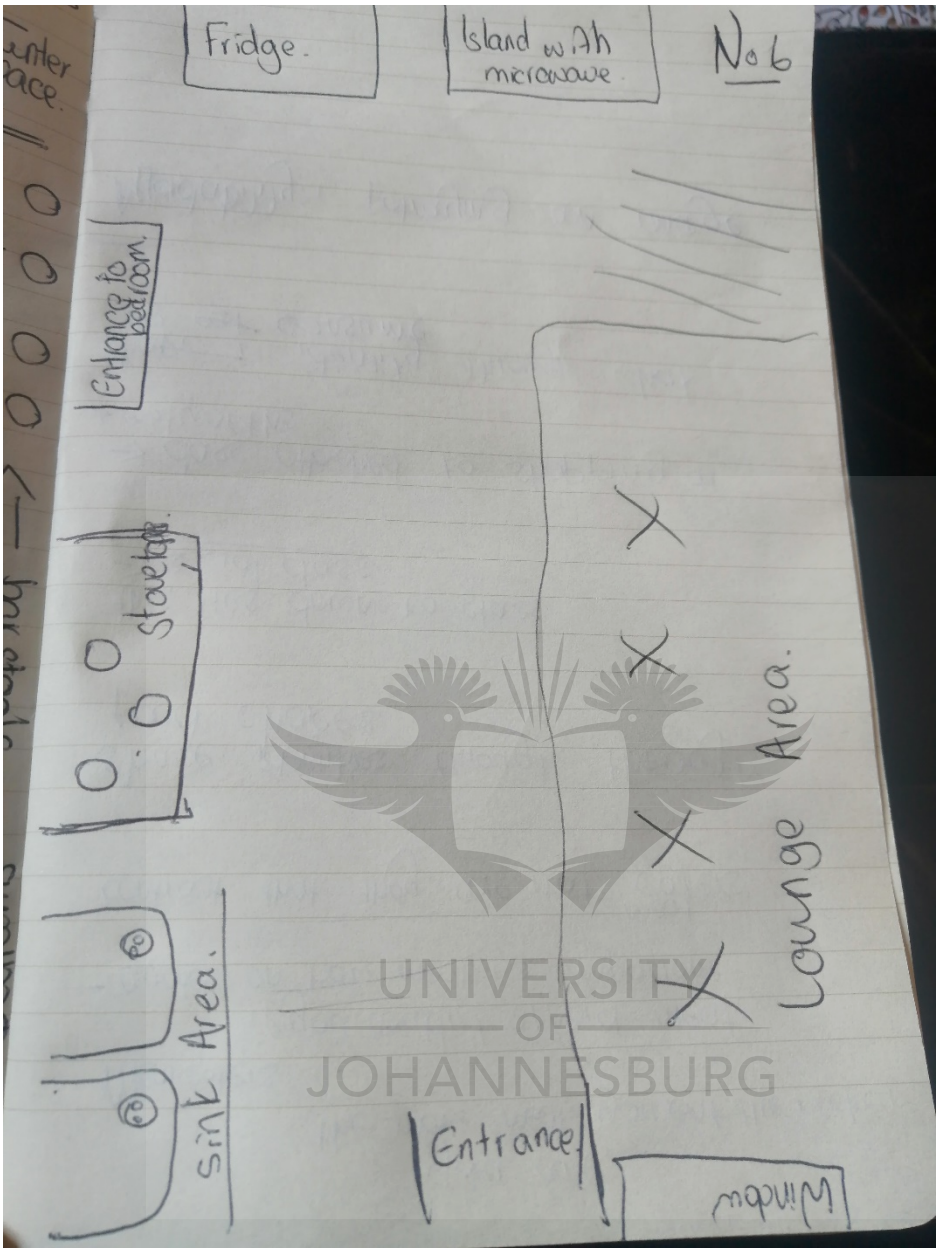
- Confirm that I have been informed about and understand the purpose of the above study.
- I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that should I have any further questions or reservations regarding this study I am free express myself or withdraw at any point during the study without giving an explanation.
- I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary therefore I will not receive anything for my assistance towards this research.
- I understand that any information that is collected during this study (photos, recordings, drawings, field notes or videos etc.) will not be misused but only presented to the University of Johannesburg for research purposes only.
- Finally, by signing I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 2: Kitchen Mappings



Kitchen Mapping: 1



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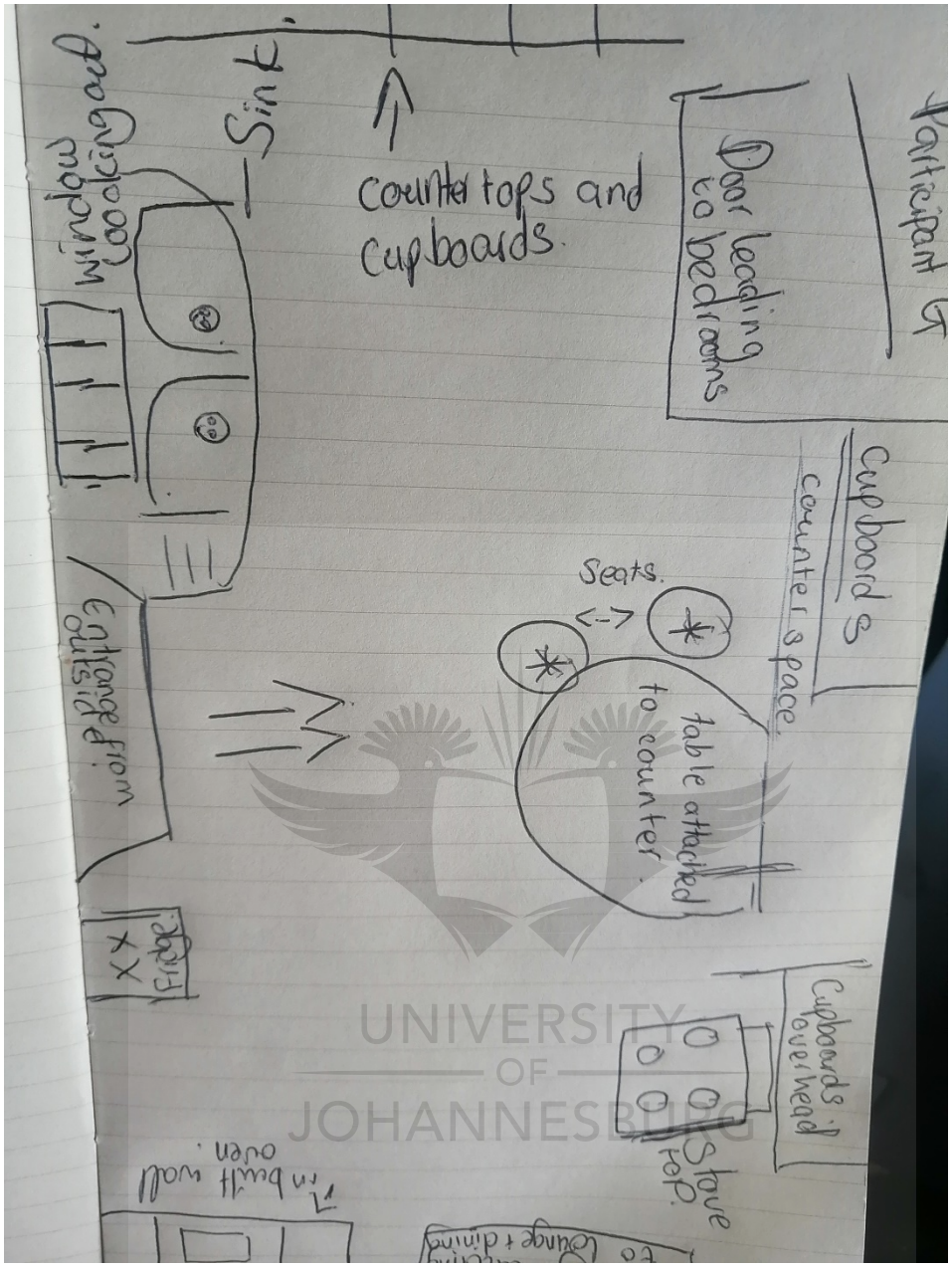

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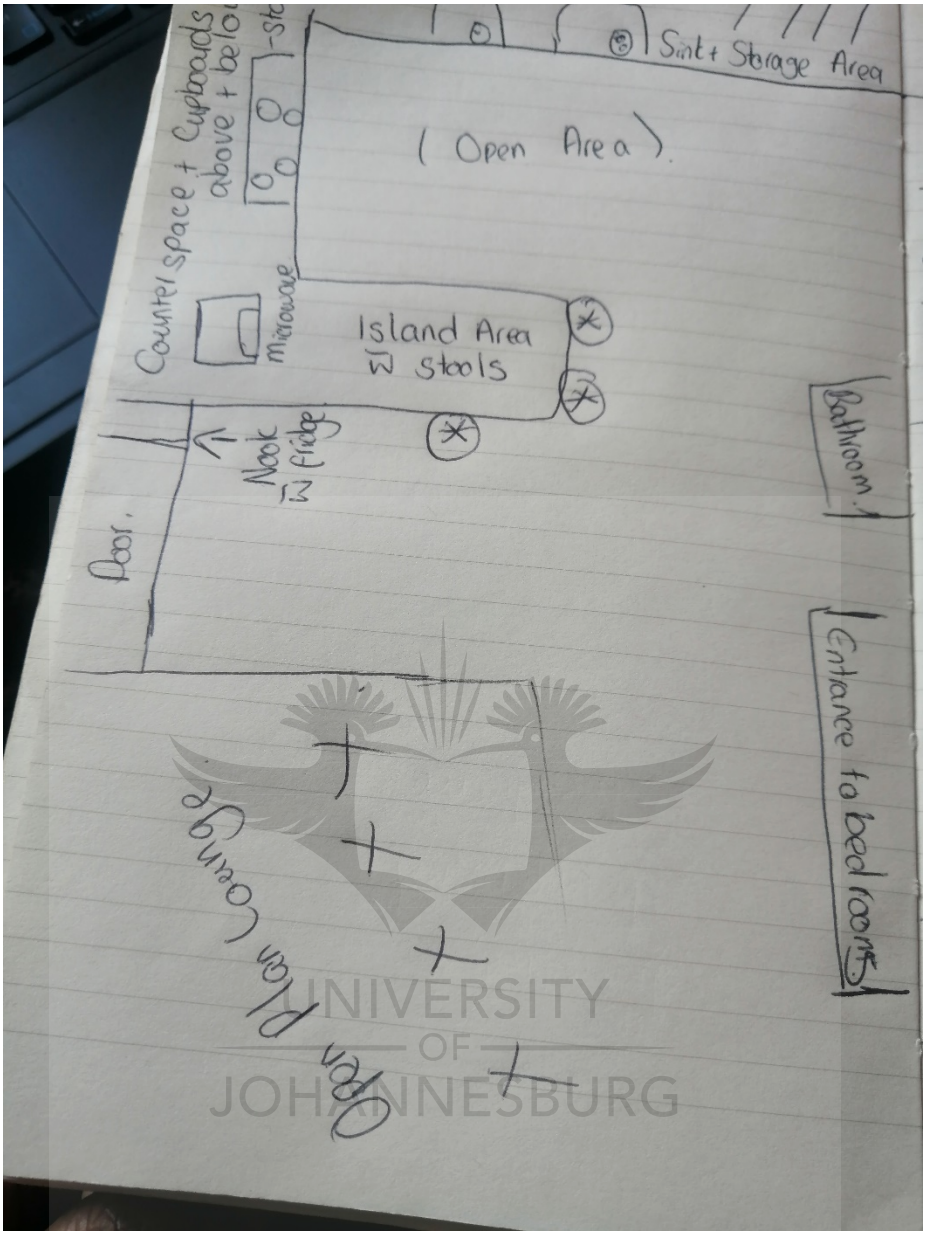

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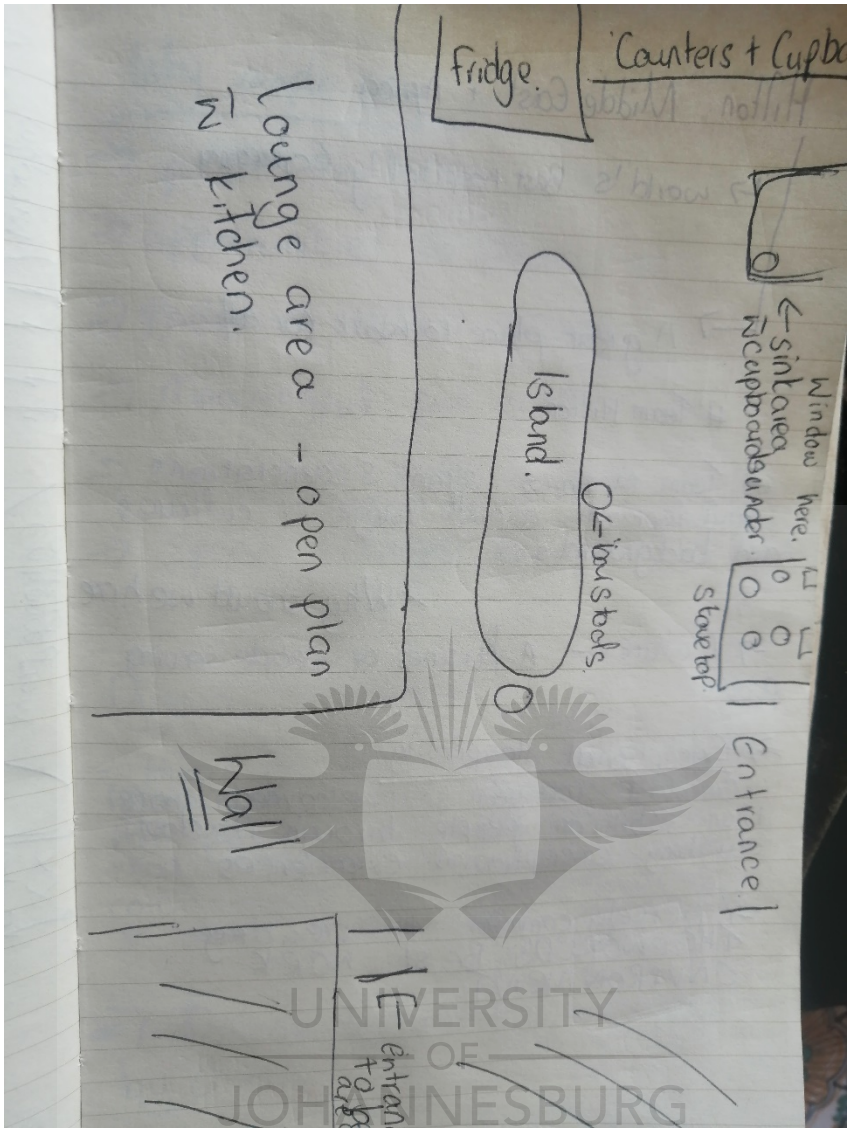

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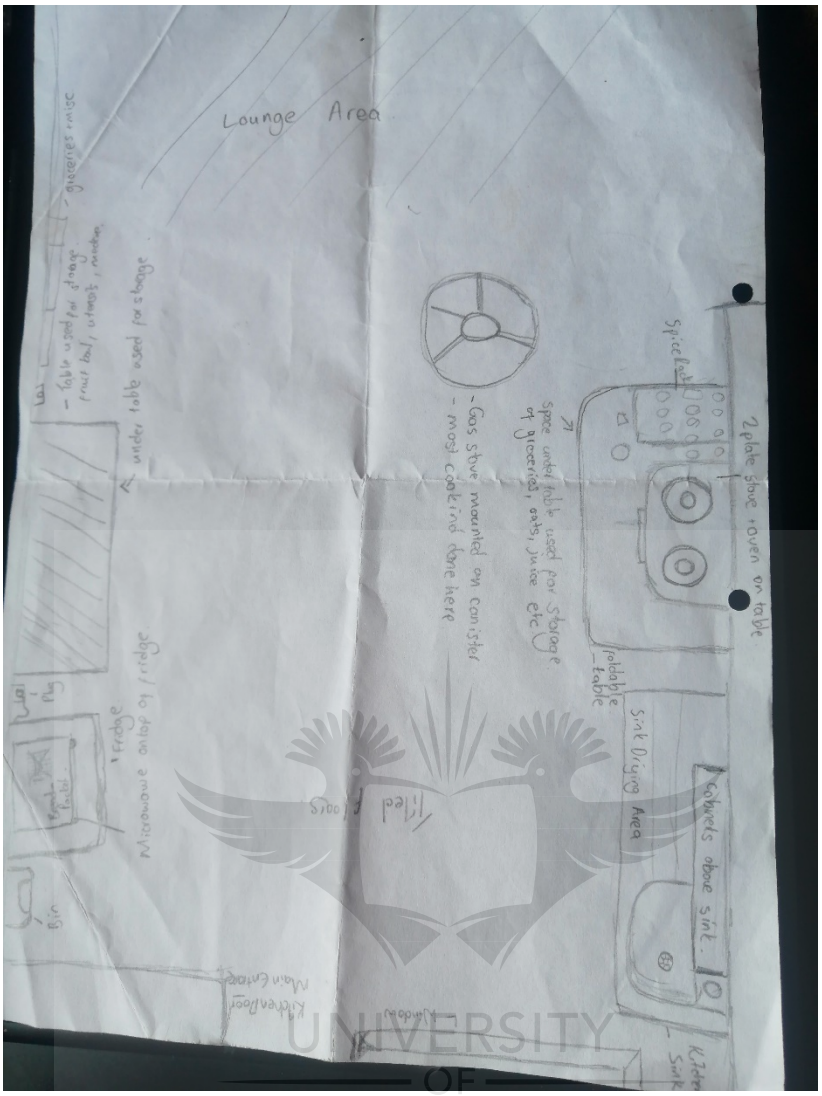

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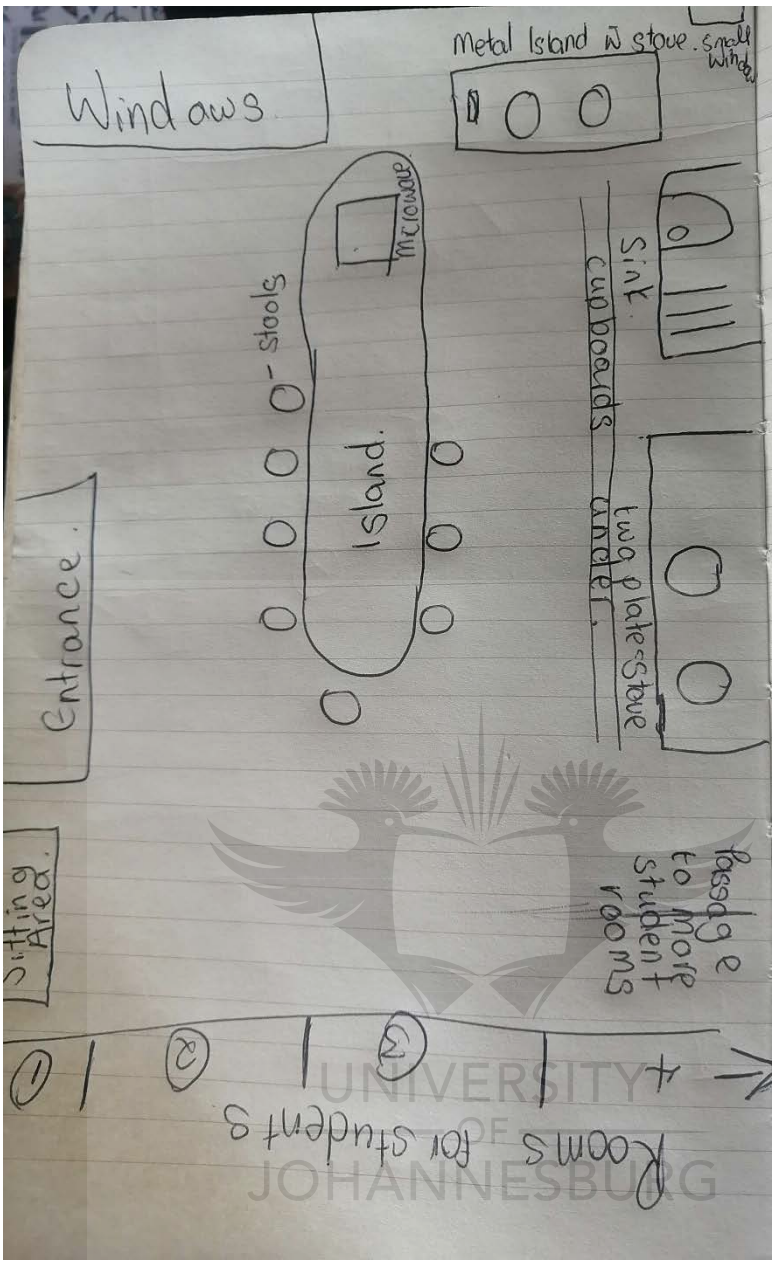

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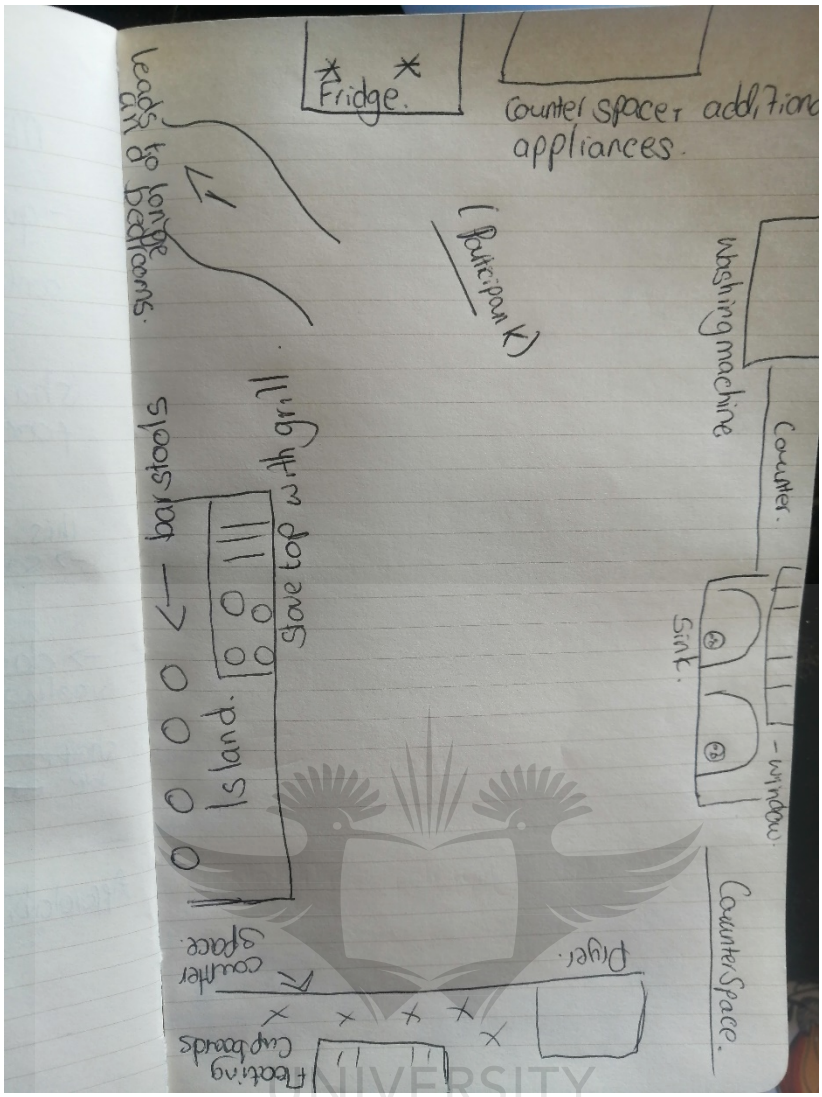

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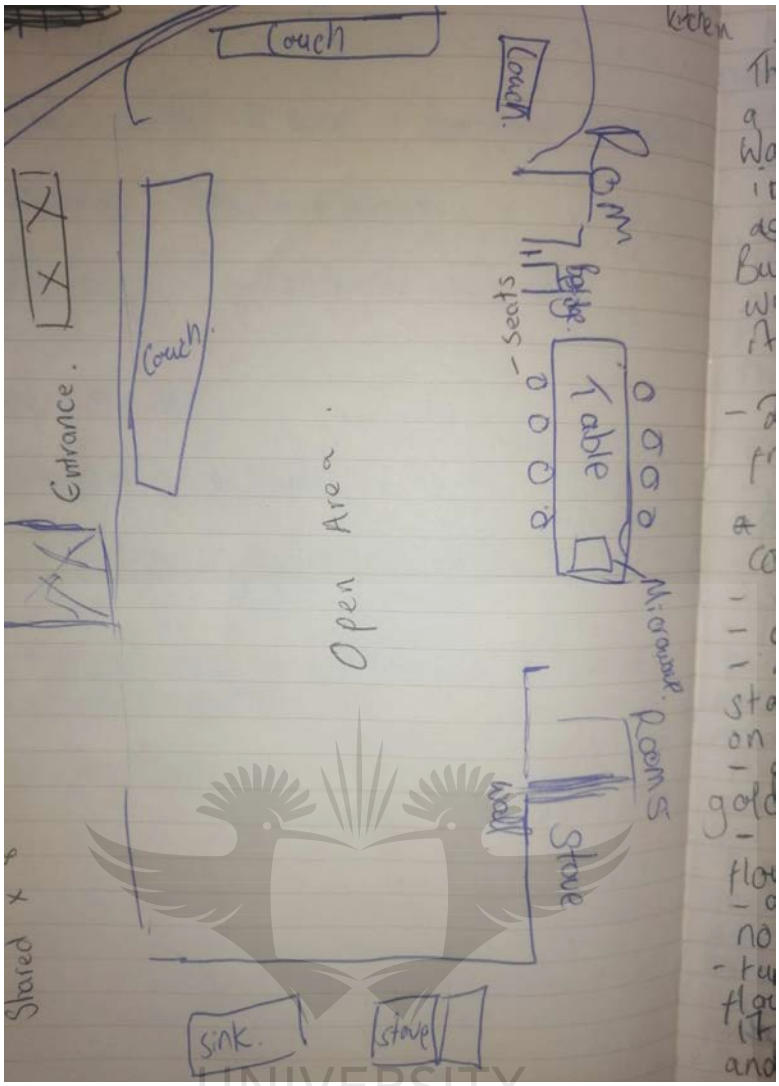

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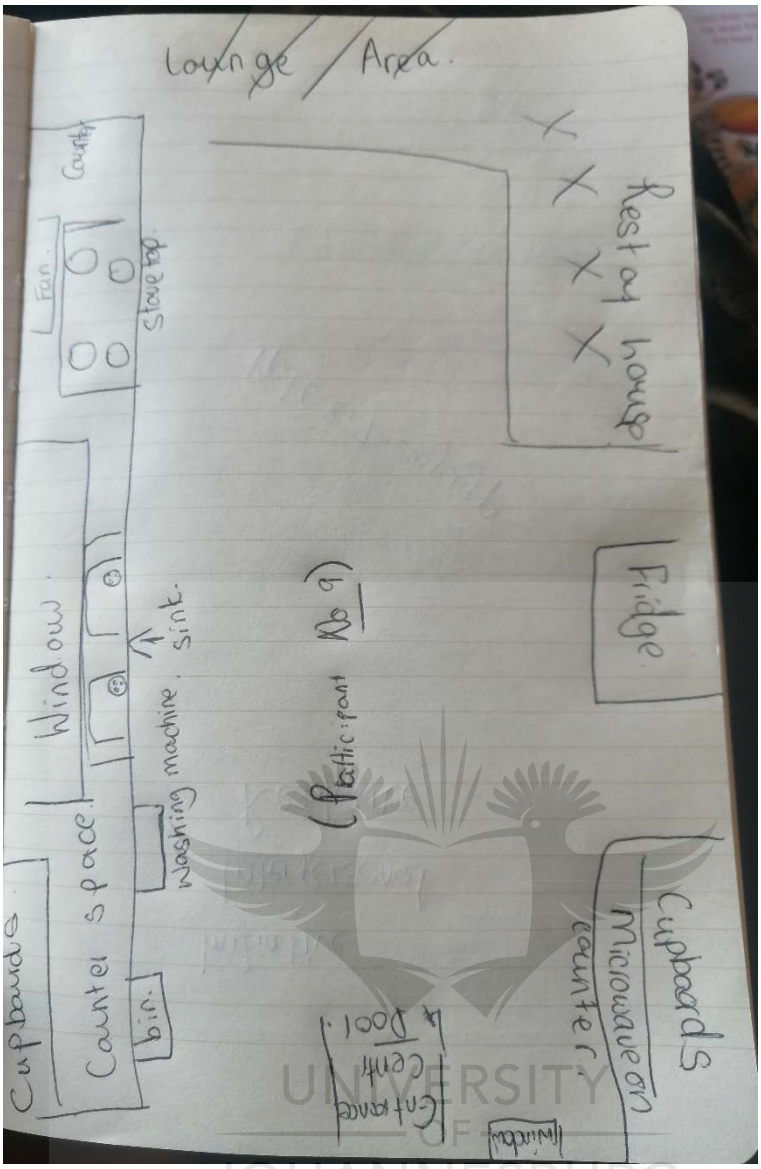

Kitchen Mapping: 10

Appendix 3: Example of Food Diary Log

Sunday 5 August

First thing in the morning, 2 cups of expressos! Brew with percolator. Banana. We usually have a big bowl of fruits at home with bananas, green apples and at the moment Woolworths naartjies are absolutely the best. I will eat a piece of fruit in the morning, banana preferably and then apple during the day.

For breakfast I ate a Turkish bread roll with Sesame seeds, spread with salted butter while we played cards at home.

In the park (Zoo Lake) we played some baseball and around 10am we snacked strawberries, some crisps, an apple and a bottle of water that *Patrick got at the Spar nearby.

I went for a meeting in Vosloorus between 12-5. In the car I had a beetroot/apple juice. There we had baby scones (home baked) and two cups of black tea with milk.

When I came home I ate fish with potato/black bean salad that *Patrick made. Very nice! I was starving. Another expresso (I love it after dinner but I do not do it every day, usually when I did not have any coffee during the day I will have a cup at night). Later, we ate peaches from a can.

At home, I drink water throughout the day by the way. Tap water. I think at least three or four cups a day. (Often after coffee for example).

**Patrick – Not his real name*

Appendix 4: Recipes

The "I'm Tired But I Need to Eat" Meal

This recipe was given to me by Estelle. Estelle, a university student, mentioned that she was often under immense pressure as a result of her workload from her research. In moments like these where she did not have the time to go shop in Braamfontein, where she typically bought Cameroonian food, she would pop into the mall closest to campus, grab vegetables and use what protein she had to make a meal.

This is the meal you make when you are not particularly concerned about invoking a certain taste but simply satisfying your hunger and the best part is that it makes use of the odds and ends in your kitchen.

Ingredients

- 4 pieces of chicken/ any protein you prefer (on the day she was not in the mood for beef)
- 1 onion
- White Pepper cloves
- Salt
- Maggi Stock cube
- Leeks
- Celery
- Parsley
- Garlic
- Tomatoes
- 6 - 8 unripe bananas if plantain is unavailable
- 4 potatoes for fried chips

What is important to note is that there were no measurements for much of the recipe, instead the eyeball technique was used for vegetables and meat, with seasoning being added after tasting.

"To me, you can never say that you are the pro of cooking. There is always someone who is doing and adding something to what you are cooking...you always learn some tricks from people." - Estelle

Method

Chicken:

- In a bowl wash and cut the four pieces of chicken into smaller pieces and set aside.
- Chop up leeks, carrots, green beans, onions and parsley then set these aside too.
- In a pot add oil enough to cover the bottom of the pot and allow the oil to heat up. Add chicken and onions to pot and stir as the chicken begins to bubble and almost

boil in its juices add the rest of the chopped vegetables and allow these to cook together with the chicken.

- In a blender add tomatoes and a handful of garlic cloves, blend them until they form a thick juice with no visible chunks and add this to the cooking chicken.
- Finally add the stock cube, pepper and salt. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.
- Leave this to cook down until most of the liquid is evaporated and the chicken and vegetables have cooked through and softened.

Fried Bananas:

- In a separate pot add enough oil to deep fry in, about 8 cm deep and allow this to heat up.
- Chop the bananas at a bias and once the oil is hot enough, throw one in to test, add several at a time, making sure not to overcrowd the pot and fry them until they are a dark golden brown.
- In a dinner plate, cover the bottom of the plate with a paper towel, this is where you will place the fried bananas as they leave the pot in order to drain the oil.
- Set them aside and for serving later

Chips:

- In a plate add potatoes that have been chopped lengthwise with a thickness of about 1cm X 2cm
- Rinse these potatoes and drain as much excess water as possible. Thereafter season them with salt, eyeballing the measurements according to your salt preferences.
- In a frying pan add about 3cm of oil and allow it to heat up. When it is hot add the potatoes, frying them until they are soft on the inside and a crisp golden brown on the outside.
- Once cooked allow the potatoes to drain on a paper towel like the fried banana, taste and add salt if more is needed.
- Finally plate all the food as desired making sure to have balanced portions of each component of the meal

A Refreshing Hibiscus Drink

This recipe was given to me by Estelle and was as flavourful as it was refreshing!

Ingredients

- Dried hibiscus leaves (500g makes 10l)
- Pineapple or mint leaves
- Sugar to taste
- Pineapple or guavas (*optional*)

Method

- Wash the dried hibiscus leaves two or three time to rinse out any dirt
- Soak the leaves in water for at least two hours, the longer you soak them the better concentrated the juice will be. Although the water is not measured make sure not to add too much as this will affect your juice
- After several hours of soaking, bring the water and hibiscus to a boil. Now you can add pineapple and/or mint leaves for fragrance
- Allow the juice to cool down and then separate the juice from the leaves, now you can add sugar to taste
- For a better taste you can blended pineapples or guavas
- Serve cold
- Keep refrigerated and drink as soon as possible to avoid fermentation, can be frozen to keep for longer

Homesick Pancakes with a Side of Nostalgia

This is a recipe that has all the “feels”. This recipe was given to me by Sunny on a day when she was feeling particularly homesick. She had been in South Africa for four months at this point and with it being her first international trip for such an extended period of time, she really missed her family. In an effort to bring home a little closer she made these pancakes. A tradition that had been started by her father for her and her sister.

Ingredients

- 1 egg per person
- Slices of Edam cheese
- Milk
- Flour
- Butter or olive oil to cook pancakes in

Aside from the eggs, there was no measurement with the rest of the ingredients instead she encouraged to measure the milk and flour “through feeling”.

“For other people, I may seem like a chaotic cook but for me, there is structure so I just know what to do.” - Sunny

Method

- In a bowl mix eggs with milk and flour making sure to mix in flour properly and pop as many flour bubbles as possible. The final consistency of the batter should be smooth and runny.
- In a pan heat up oil or butter
- Add a thin layer of batter to the heated oil ensuring to cover the bottom of the pan
- When the batter starts to solidify and form bubbles on its surface, add a slice of Edam cheese and add another layer of batter ensuring the cheese is completely covered

- Once the surface of the pancake begins to solidify turn over the pancake and cook to a golden brown colour
- Repeat this process until all the batter has been used up, these pancakes can be eaten for breakfast or dinner, as is or with sweet or savoury sides

Lazy Gourmet

This is a recipe I received from my participant David. What I liked about it was that it was easy, flavourful and a really decent meal for the amount of work that went into it or should I say, didn't go into it.

Ingredients

- 4 pieces of chicken
- Brocolli
- 1 Onion
- French Beans
- Corriander
- Salt
- Ginger and garlic paste
- Masala

Method

- Chop up all the vegetables and add to a bowl
- Cut chicken pieces and add to the bowl
- Add all the spices and rub them into the vegetables and meat, making sure they are well coated
- To a large pan, add enough oil to cover the bottom
- Add vegetables and chicken to the pan and cover
- On a low heat cook for 2 hours on the stove top

A Taste of Spain

A recipe that promised to offer a true taste of Spain although a note that I should add is that, Diego my participant, would have preferred that it be made with seafood but he could not find seafood that was satisfactory and substituted with chicken instead. This is a meal that he was very comfortable with and often made when he had company coming over.

Ingredients

- 4 pieces of chicken
- 1 chopped Tomato
- 1 diced Onion
- 1 Green pepper sliced lengthwise
- 1 cup of chopped Green beans
- 1 ½ cups of Risotto rice
- 2 Garlic cloves
- 3 tablespoons of Olive oil preferably from Spain

With this recipe, the preparation of ingredients prior to cooking is key as everything is cooked in quick succession.

Method

Paella:

- In a Paella pan, saute onions and garlic in olive oil, lightly season with salt.
- In a separate, smaller pan, slowly sweat the green peppers on low heat so as not to overcook them and change the colour as these are for garnishing.
- Add chicken pieces to the paella pan and brown them on both sides then remove from pan and set aside
- Add the vegetables and allow them to slowly cook until soft.

- Once the vegetables are cooked, add the chicken pieces. To this add a cup of stock and sprinkle rice across the paella pan, making sure not to cover the chicken.
- Periodically rotate the pan to ensure the heat is well distributed, continue to do this until the rice and chicken are well cooked, serve with a glass of white wine

A Glass of Gazpacho

This is a recipe for a drink that I also got from Diego. Having never been a fan of tomato juice, I was pleasantly surprised by how flavourful it was although I will not be making this my favourite drink anytime soon.

Ingredients

- 6 medium tomatoes
- 2 cloves of garlic
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method:

- In a blender add all the tomatoes, cut into quarters, garlic and about a quarter cup of olive oil and a bit of salt to taste.
- Blend these ingredients until a thick frothy juice remains, add pepper and enjoy

A Meal Fit for a Farmer?

This is a recipe that I received from Rachel. This was one of her favourite meals and she had prepared it for me as on this particular day it was still chilly out in late August with the last bite of winter sitting in the air. She mused to me how Kale had reminded her of a very similar leafy green from back home known as boerenkool the only difference being that boerenkool was nowhere near as expensive as kale was and was actually nicknamed "farmer's cabbage" back home in the Netherlands. You can imagine the surprise she got when we found out "Kale" was just the English word for boerenkool!

Ingredients

- One bag of Woolworths Kale
- Fennel seeds
- Cumin
- Halloumi
- Three potatoes, peeled and diced

Method

- In a medium sized pot, boil the potatoes until soft
- In another pot saute the kale with fennel and cumin, about a teaspoon each
- Once the Kale is cooked mash with potatoes until potatoes are mashed and well incorporated, set aside
- In a pan fry halloumi slices are golden brown
- Plate and serve

Oven Roasted Mackerel

I received this recipe from Veronica and honestly is one of my favourites because of the balance of heat and flavour.

Ingredients

- Mackerel fish (1 per person)
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Onion
- Mixed peppers
- Habanero pepper (start with one depending on the heat you like)
- Leeks
- Celery
- Ginger
- Garlic

Method

- Preheat oven to 200 degrees Celsius
- In a blender add all the ingredients except the fish. This will form a paste, add oil if too dry
- Use this paste to baste the fish, use a grill tray and roast until fish is flaky and cooked through
- Serve with rice and salad